LEARNING, ACHIEVEMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Maria do Céu Taveira · Joana Carneiro Pinto · Ana Daniela Silva

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Título:
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Braga, 2012

ISBN:
978-989-97915-0-3

APDC Edições
Edifício da Escola de Psicologia
Universidade do Minho, Campus de Gualtar
4710-057 Braga
www.apdc.eu
edicoes@apdc.eu

Design:
Forthetimebeing
Helena Castro
Sérgio Cameira

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Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling in the Schools: Career-life Planning For All

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A fits version of this paper was presented at the VI Conference on Career Development, in Braga, Portugal, 2010.

Young people today are facing a very different world than their teachers and parents faced as adolescents. Technology is doubling every two years. The top 10 jobs in demand in 2010 did not exist in 2004. We are preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that have not yet been invented, in order to solve problems that we don't even know are problems yet. To succeed at this task, schools (and parents) need to address the whole-person needs of students and not restrict themselves to only focusing on academic learning. This is best accomplished when career guidance and personal development are infused into all school subjects, and when guidance practitioners and counsellors are able to demonstrate the added value that a whole-person approach can offer.

Keywords *– comprehensive guidance, career guidance, career theory*

CONTEXT

To paint a context for the main messages I want to convey, I will begin by asking readers to reflect on two questions: (a) Think back to when you were in high school; did you have an idea of what you wanted to do in your career? Then (b) think about your current career; to what extent are you dong that now? If I were posing these questions in a large presentation hall, I would ask people to raise their hands if they had an idea when they were in high school of what they wanted to do in the way of career. I would ask people to look around and see how many people raised their hands. Typically almost everyone (95%+) would raise their hand. Then I would ask them to keep their hands up if they were doing that now. Again I would ask people to look around and see how many hands were still raised. Typically only a few people (less than 10%) would still have their hands raised. I would comment on the observation that the majority of people had career goals in high school and they are not doing that now. Therefore, I wonder why adults are putting so much pressure on adolescents to make career decisions when they are in high school. Or saying in another way, maybe it's time to reduce the pressure to decide and instead encourage the need to explore, be open, learn to adapt, and learn to be flexible.

We live in rapidly changing times and young people today face a very different world than their teachers and parents faced as adolescents. One occupation for life is no longer the norm. Statistics Canada figures indicate that the average Canadian worker changes jobs every 3 years and changes occupations every 5 years. The average Canadian experiences 6-10 changes in occupation during his or her working life. The US Department of Labor estimates that in the USA, today's learners will have 10-14 jobs by age 38. But still, there is pressure on adolescents to make a choice of career path before they finish high school, and often there has been very little exploration to inform the decision-making process.

Technology is changing rapidly and the rate of change also is increasing. Think back 15 years ago (most teachers and guidance counsellors are about 15 years older than their students, or more). Think of what technology, or other factors in the world, exists today that did not exist in 1995, but are a part of every day living today. The list might include: cell phones, DVD players, Blue Ray, big screen plasma televisions, digital cameras, global recession because 1 country had lax banking laws, cross boarder career mobility, common currency in Europe, and the list could continue for a long time. <Glumbert.com> reports that the amount of new technological information is doubling every 2 years, which means that half of what students learn in their first year of a 4-year technical program will be outdated by their third

year and three-quarters of what they learned in their first year, and half of what they learned in their second year will be outdated by the time they graduate. As many as 80% of new jobs in 2010 did not exist 10 years ago and a similar percentage of jobs that existed 10 years ago do not exist today. The top 10 jobs in demand in 2010 did not exist in 2004. In a sense, we are preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist, using technologies that have not yet been invented, in order to solve problems that we don't even know are problems yet (Arzuaga, de Tezanos, & Fernando Arzuaga, n.d.). How are we as educators, guidance practitioners, and parents, preparing young people to deal with these types of situations?

How are young people reacting to this changing world? Studies done with Canadian adolescents in many cities (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, & Witko, 2004; Borgen, & Hiebert, 2006; Hiebert & Huston, 1992; Hiebert, Kemeny, & Kurchak, 1998; Magnusson & Bernes, 2001; Posterski & Bibby, 1988) have found that the most frequent and intense worry of adolescents is "what do I do after high school." It is a career-life planning concern and the aspirations of these students are not realistic. For example, in Canada, 80% of grade 10 students plan to attend university, or some other formal post-secondary education, and their parents expect that also. This expectation is impossible to meet, because there are not enough spaces in post-secondary institutions to accommodate that many students. Furthermore, only 30% – 40% of students expect to leave high school and go directly into the labour force. In reality, about one-third of students attend some form of formal post-secondary education and two-thirds move from high school directly into the labour force. Of those who do attend post-secondary education, only about half of them complete the programs they begin. The rest change majors or drop out, moving directly into the labour force. The number one reason that students report for changing programs or dropping out is "lack of fit" i.e., they do not see the relevance of the programs they are taking. (Lambert, Zeman, Allen, & Bussiere, 2004). The question arises: How well is the majority being served?

Some people have learned to be flexible and are able to adjust to these new circumstances, but many are having difficulty adjusting to the constantly changing world in which we live. The role of guidance in helping people adapt to new and changing environments is critical, not just in the area of careers, but in all facets of living. The need for life-long guidance and life-wide guidance is more important today that it ever has been in the past. In the guidance field we need to attract the young and the brightest to understand the challenge of helping others deal successfully with our constantly changing world and to see professional guidance as a challenging but very rewarding career path.

A few years ago, and group of creative Canadian career development leaders held a brainstorming session to identify a better approach for talking to youth about careers. The result has become known as the *High 5 + 1: New Career Development Messages for Youth* (Redekopp, Day, & Robb, 1995). They are summarized below.

1. **Change is constant**
   • The only thing certain is that everything is changing.
   • Many jobs that exist today will be obsolete in 5 years.
2. **Focus on the journey**
   • Since change is happening so rapidly, the job we are preparing for today may not exist when the training is complete.
   • Since the occupational destination is uncertain, the journey is all that can be counted on, so it is important to enjoy it.
3. **Follow your heart**
   • How often have we seen a boarder line student, catch fire and begin to succeed in school, often because they found a teacher they really liked.
   • How many people have made a dramatic career change in their mid-forties to pursue a dream that they "always wanted to do."
   • People tend to strive for, and be motivated by, what they are interested in.
   • Passion is what drives the soul.
4. **Keep learning**
   • Since everything is changing, all people will continue to learn.
   • People do not stagnate, they continue developing. The question is whether or not they want to influence the direction of their development or leave it to chance.
   • It is not a matter of "if" people will keep learning, but of "what" they will continue to learn, and whether that learning will be planful of haphazard.
5. **Access your allies**
   • 80% of all jobs are filled in the informal labour market.
   • Personal contacts are the richest source of job leads.
   • Personal networks help to what keep our thinking straight (or not), keep us motivated, and help us grow.
6. **Believe in yourself**
   • Belief in self is one of the most important personal characteristics, it pervades everything that we do.
   • If people don't believe in themselves, it will be hard to get others to believe in them.
   • Everyone has many positive characteristics, it is a matter of focusing on the positives, rather than dwelling on the negatives.

Figure 1. High 5 + 1: New Career Development Messages for Youth

In my country, and in many countries, *The High 5 + 1* have become widely accepted as the new career messages that young people and their parents need to hear.

Conceptual Foundations for Career Guidance in a Changing World

What is the theoretical and conceptual support for re-focussing career guidance and career education to address the current political, economic, and social system we all experience. Interestingly enough, the support comes from the theoretical leaders in our field. It is widely accepted that career development is the life-long process of managing learning, work, and transitions, in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future. Thus, career planning is life planning: Developing a vision for your life. A vision for ones life addresses the question: What kind of a person do I want to become? There are some guidelines in theory to help answer that question.

Donald Super

Likely everyone has heard of Donald Super, who was a founding member of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, and one of the first people to create a systematic theory of career development. For many people, Donald Super is associated with stages of career development. However, I think there is more to be gained by examining the basic propositions underlying his theory (See Super, 1987; Super & Knasel, 1979). I have grouped them into 3 broad categories.

The first category is multi-potentiality, which refers to the fact that most people are good at more than one thing, and most jobs require people to be good at more than one thing. People's characteristics are different and broad and occupational requirements are different and broad. Therefore, each person could qualify for many occupations. There is no best job for any given person, but there are many jobs where a person could be successful, experience high job satisfied, and feel like they are making a contribution to themselves and society.

Secondly, career development is a process that unfolds across time and goes hand-in-hand with self-concept development. The activities people engage in, the outcomes they experience, the tools and techniques they learn to use, all interact to form personal beliefs, values, and abilities that

produce self-concept which can map onto numerous jobs and can be enacted through both paid and non-paid work. Personal values, beliefs, and abilities are subject to external influences, and for most people test results contribute a relatively low amount of influence. Thus, self-concepts change across time and so do career paths, as a result of the experiences that people encounter.

Thirdly, because career development and self-concept development are so closely intertwined, without job satisfaction, there will be little life satisfaction. Because a job occupies more than one-third of each day, if a job is not satisfying it will be hard to be satisfied with life. Life satisfaction comes from many sources, each source related to the various roles that people enact. Super created the career-life rainbow to illustrate the various roles that people occupy over a lifetime. Career satisfaction results from integrating work roles with the other aspects of a person's self-concept. When the integration is high, life satisfaction and career satisfaction will be high. Conversely, when self-concept is not integrated, i.e., when the various components of self-concept are disjointed, disconnected, or opposing, life satisfaction and career satisfaction will be quite low. Pulling these ideas all together, we find major support for the belief that career planning is life planning, having a vision for one's life and a plan to help the vision become a reality.

Ken Hoyt

Ken Hoyt focused a large part of his career on applications of career theory in public school systems. He was one of the first people make a distinction between the concept of work and other related concepts such as occupation, job, career, and employment (Hoyt, 1991). Hoyt defined work as conscious effort producing benefits to self and others. Work consisted of the things people do that they find fulfilling and satisfying. Work is not tied to paid employment, but to meaningful and satisfying activities, hence the use of terms such as volunteer work. For Hoyt, employment was tied to payment, but not necessarily to work, for sometimes people are paid for doing things from which they gain little satisfaction or not much sense of personal fulfilment. Hoyt called this drudgery. Hoyt defined career as the sum total of everything a person does that requires conscious effort and produces benefits to self and/or others. Thus, everyone has a career, even elementary school students. One goal of career/life planning is to find paid employment that also is work (not drudgery), i.e., to find paid employment where an individual experiences a sense of satisfaction, self-fulfilment, and making a

contribution to the larger societal picture (Hoyt, 1988, 1991).

John Krumboltz

John Krumboltz has made numerous contributions to career development theory and his perspectives have been categorized in many different ways. My preference is to avoid placing ideas into theoretical boxes and instead select those aspects of a theory that are particularly relevant for addressing the context of change that people face today. For Krumboltz, three constructs are of particular importance.

Krumboltz was one of the first people to describe in detail the powerful influence that observational learning has on people's career choices. Young people especially observe significant others in their lives (parents, aunts, uncles, neighbours, etc.) and form beliefs about what different occupations involve, how appealing (or not) different occupations are, and their place in the world of work. Krumboltz referred to these beliefs as Self-Observation Generalizations, or SOGs (Krumboltz, 1983). SOGs are beliefs about self and the world of work, such as: "I am no good a math and therefore any job involving math is not right for me" or "I get nervous about speaking to a group of people, so any job that involves speaking to groups of people would be too stressful for me" or "there are no good jobs available, all the good jobs already have been taken (so why bother trying to find any job)" or "it's who you know that counts, not what you know, so I don't have any chance of finding a good job." Often there is a grain of truth in a SOG, but often it gets distorted and becomes a "rule to live by" and can either limit, or expand, the career alternatives that young people are willing to entertain. Part of the job of guidance workers is to help clients identify their own personal SOGs, reality test the validity of those SOGs, and where necessary replace limiting SOGs with more productive ones. The "High 5 + 1" messages described earlier are one way of counteracting unproductive and limiting SOGs and providing appropriate and successful role models for young people also is extremely important.

A second important contribution that Krumboltz has made flows from the construct described above, building on the work of Bandura (1977), focusing on the constructs of self-efficacy and personal agency. Self-efficacy involves people's beliefs about their ability to perform different tasks and beliefs about the likely consequences of performing those tasks. Self-efficacy is part of a larger construct called personal agency, or beliefs about the extent to which people think they are active agents in their own life circumstances. People with high personal agency believe that the situations they

experience are largely a function of their own role in participating in those situations. In other words, they are not passive recipients of what fate hands them, but active players in their own life experiences. People who have accurate self-efficacy beliefs and a high sense of personal agency usually are also highly motivated to set and pursue their goals and most often are very successful in achieving those goals. As educators and guidance workers, it is useful to think that part of our job involved engineering success experiences for young people so that they develop self-confidence in their abilities and also to help them shift to an alternate plan when things do not turn out as expected.

More recently, Krumboltz (Krumboltz, 2000; Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999) introduced the notion of *planned happenstance*. Happenstance is a general term used to describe things that happen seemingly for no particular reason. Sometimes such events as ascribed to luck or serendipity. However Krumboltz points out that frequently when such events are examined more closely, it is possible to see that a person played a large role in positioning him or her self so that the good luck happened to them and not someone else. Thus, opportunity awareness becomes an important skill so that people learn to identify opportunities that are about to happen, in order to place themselves in a position where good luck will happen to them. Astute readers will notice that the three concepts I describe in this section are inter-related and very closely connected to the *High 5 + 1* messages described earlier. Surrounding young people with role models that provide good examples of people who are motivated and successful in their careers and who demonstrate and expended and non-stereotypic approach to career-life planning, engineering success experiences to build self-confidence and personal agency, and teaching opportunity awareness and the ability to plan their good luck, can all make important contributions towards teaching people to cope successfully with the constantly changing world in which we live today.

Summary: Pulling it all Together

There are several themes running through all of the perspectives described above. These are summarized briefly below. A central theme in the preceding text is that career planning is life planning. It is not possible to separate career from other aspects of a person's life, hence the commonly used expression career-life planning. Moreover, the main driver in career-life planning is a person's vision for their life, i.e., their answer to the question "What kind of a person do I want to become?" It is important also to re-

member the implications arising form the construct of multi-potentiality. People can be successful in many occupations. There is no "best job" for any given individual and in fact it is important to develop the idea that all jobs are valuable, and should be valued, as potential sources of satisfaction and fulfillment. Furthermore, all of a person's life roles contribute to their personal satisfaction. The main career-life goal for adolescents, and younger people, is exploration. Therefore it is important to teach young people how to make informed choices, i.e., how to explore within themselves, to discover their own interests, abilities, values, personal life goals; how to explore outside themselves to see what is involved in different occupations; and reality test the occupational alternatives they are considering. In the process it is important for people to discover their passions, the things they get excited about, and the activities from which they derive a sense of personal fulfillment. In the process of exploration, it is important also to discover that personal fulfillment is largely self-determined and that they are active agents in the lives they lead.

For educators, guidance workers, and parents, it is important to realize the usefulness of beginning career education at a very early age, in fact, the younger the better. Young people need to develop adequate exploration skills, acquire good decision-making skills, and develop an attitude that embraces the importance of being planful and making informed choices. Adults need to provide an environment that supports and encourages exploration, goal seeking, goal setting, and that minimizes the barriers that young people face, especially artificial barriers that often result from the unfulfilled dreams of adults. The central unifying theme in the above discussion is that career planning is life planning and that it is good to approach career-life planning in a planful way. i.e., it is good to have a plan, and in fact any plan is better than no plan. The guiding questions are: "what kind of a person do I want to become?" and "How do the activities in which I engage, the learning opportunities I pursue, and the attitudes I develop, contribute to my plan for my life?"

The Practice of guidance in a Changing World

Hopefully you have found some of this interesting and thought provoking, perhaps even useful, but the fundamental question is: What does all of this have to do with professional practice. I have found that a useful way to help people think about the implications for practice is to give people a short thought listing exercise. I tell them that I am going to give them a question and ask them to write down all the words or phrases that come to their mind

in response to the question—I will give them 1 minute to do this exercise. The question is: "What is being a guidance specialist all about?" (depending on the audience I might ask what is being a counsellor all about, or what is being a social worker all about, etc.) When I do this activity in a large presentation hall, I tell people to stop writing and put down their pens at the 1 minute mark, and I ask them to call out the types of things they have written down. Typically, people mention things like: facilitating, listening, helping, supporting, encouraging, being empathic, etc. Most often, all of the words are process words. In the minds of people in the audience, being a guidance specialist (or a counsellor, or a social worker, etc.) is about process. It is very seldom that anyone mentions any outcome words, such as client change, achieving goals, a more fulfilling life, etc. Since my colleagues and I have observed this, we have been advocating that counsellors and guidance practitioners reconceptualise their roles as involving two equally important components: Process and outcome. Process is important, but equally important are the outcomes that result from the processes we use.

Focusing on process, one implication coming from what I have said in this paper has to do with the importance of addressing the whole-person needs of young people, not just their academic learning, but also the social, emotional, psychological, dimensions of the context in which our young people live. We need to remember that the world in which we live today is very different than the world we lived in when we were adolescents. We are living in a world where flexibility and adaptability are more important than ever before. People in the guidance field are uniquely positioned to coordinate and provide leadership in meeting the whole-person needs of young people and doing it in a way that provides evidence that guidance is making a positive difference in the lives of students. In North America, this whole-person perspective is characterized by a comprehensive approach to guidance and counselling in schools. In Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling (CGC) (see Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Gysbers, Hughey, Starr, & Lapan, 1992), an infusion approach is adopted where meeting the whole-person needs of students is viewed as an integral part of the main mission of the school and guidance objectives are part of every course (see Hiebert, 1993). In schools where a CGC approach is implemented, many positive academic and non-academic outcomes typically result. These include: increased academic achievement, lower absenteeism, reduced student alienation, reduced drop-out rate, reduced incidence of substance abuse, greater student participation in school programs, more positive school climate, enhanced satisfaction with school, increased student satisfaction with the quality of their education, increased student reports that school experiences are relevant and adequate preparation for the future (see Hughey, Gysbers, & Starr,

1993; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997 for research reports).

Turning our attention to outcome, most people working in the guidance field believe that they are providing a worthwhile service to the clients they see. However, evidence to support this belief is frequently sparse. The problem was highlighted at a recent Pan-Canadian Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy. Policy makers stated explicitly that in order to continue to provide funding for career guidance, it was necessary to provide evidence attesting to the positive impact of career services on clients, and that the researcher and practitioner communities had not yet made a convincing case that career guidance was having a positive impact. In response to this challenge, the Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-based Practice in Career Development (CRWG) was formed. The CRWG is an ad hoc group of researchers from seven different universities and one private foundation, who pooled their talents to develop more convincing ways to demonstrate the value of career guidance in schools, government agencies, and community-based agencies that provide career services. The CRWG has created a framework for gathering evidence that permits making a connection between the resources used, the processes in which service providers and clients engage, and the outcomes that are achieved, i.e., the knowledge and skills that clients acquire, the personal attributes that clients develop, and the impact on the clients life, plus in some cases the economic and societal impact that results from career services (see Baudoin, et al., 2007). The CRWG also has developed a compendium of tools and resources that can be used to gather evidence connecting the services provided to the outcomes obtained (available from http://www.ccdf.ca/crwg/tools.html). Over the past 3 years members of the CRWG have been involved in various projects that have developed new interventions and validated the evaluation framework (for research reports and intervention guides, see http://www.ccdf.ca/crwg/reports.html). All of the materials developed by the CRWG are available free of charge to members of the career development community by accessing the websites

A repeating theme in this paper is that guidance needs to be responsive to the changing contexts that our clients face every day. Perhaps the allegory presented in Fig. 2 will provide a convincing illustration of the need for reform in the philosophies and practices of those of us working in the guidance profession.

There an American legend of Rip Van Winkle, a villager of Dutch descent, who lived in a nice village at the foot of a small mountain range. He is a pleasant man, but his home and his farm suffer because he frequently gets distracted by things around him and does not complete what he starts. He is generally loved by everyone except for his wife, who gets impatient with him and is sometimes prone to nagging him to complete the things he starts and to do more around the house and the farm.

One autumn day he escapes by wandering into the mountains, where he encounters strangely dressed men, who he assumes to be the rumored ghosts early explorers that frequent the mountains. After drinking some of their liquor, he settles down under a shady tree and falls asleep. He wakes and returns to his village, where he finds 20 years have passed. He discovers that his wife has died and that his close friends have died or moved somewhere else. He sees that there are strange and noisy vehicles that do not require any horses to make them go, and many other changes that are barely believable.

Now suppose that Rip Van Winkle fell asleep 20 years ago from today and wandered down the mountain and into a hospital, would he see much difference? Suppose he wandered into a school classroom? Suppose he wandered into a career guidance office, or into a university program preparing guidance counsellors? How much change would he see?

Figure 2. An Allegory to Consider

We live in a changing world and we need to respond to it differently than we did 20 years ago. Young people need different sets of skills, different spheres of knowledge, and most of all the personal attributes that will help them adapt to and be successful with the unpredictability of the world they face (Hiebert, Donaldson, Pyryt, Arthur, 1998; Magnusson, Day, & Redekopp, 1989). There are trustworthy theories of career development that offer useful guidelines for how to address our changing context. We need to draw on these ideas to guide our interactions with clients and also to guide our interactions with ourselves as we engage in our own career-life planning. Career-life planning involves gaining clarity on our vision for our life and creating an implementation plan that will help us meet our personal and professional goals.

Underlying the ideas I have presented is a large social action agenda. We need to be able to provide policy makers, as well as managers, supervisors and funders, with the evidence they need to provide us with the type and amount of support we need. We need to find out how to engage our policy makers and government departments to work together with us to create the infrastructure needed to support life-long and life-wide guidance services to all who need them. It involves identifying the people who are in positions of influence and who can help to make changes, then learning how to talk to these people in a way that provides the messages they need to hear, in language they can understand, and pointing out to them how it is in their best interest to support guidance services. The task is larger than any of us could manage individually, so we need to be able to recruit others in the quest to address the whole person needs of students and other clients across the life span. As counsellor educators and trainers of guidance practitioners we need to broaden the focus in our university programs to include the broad spectrum of competencies that are needed to help people work effectively with the clients they see. Working together to promote the field of guidance and counselling will accomplish much more than any person could accomplish individually. All of us are more capable than any of us. There are accomplished leaders and dedicated supporters in our various countries, and together, I believe we can make a substantial difference to the practice of life-long and life-wide guidance in our countries.

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Learning, Achievement and Career of Institutionalized Youths: Portraits of the Portuguese and Brazilian realities

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This chapter takes a theoretical and critical approach to what the literature broadly refers to as institutionalized youths[2] in terms of both their learning/achievement and career paths, before specifically analyzing the Portuguese and Brazilian realities in terms of the characteristics of this population and key problems faced by these young persons. We then provide an overview of the best intervention practices in this area in general terms and concrete indications of the practices implemented in the respective two countries. We finish this article with a critical conclusion on the aforementioned realities and identify needs and clues for both future research and intervention in this field.

Keywords: *Institutionalised youths, career, Portugal, Brazil*

2 Traditionally, young persons have been referred to as adolescents and defined as a generic age group in the life cycle and characterized by universal psychological and biological transformations. We propose, in this article, that the notion of young persons or youths, be understood as a variation in the differentiated ways and terms of being and feeling young rather than merely deeming it as a universal phase in everybody's life, which broadly ignores the cultural and psycho-social situations and conditions inherent to each young person in particular.

INTRODUCTION

Career Psychology posits that work and the family take on ever greater weighting in the exploratory processes ongoing throughout adolescence, as well as in the learning and development contexts fundamental to the processes of young person career construction (Cinamom & Rich's, 2004; Flum & Blustein, 2000; Gonçalves & Coimbra, 2007; Ribeiro, 2010; Vondracek & Skorikov, 1997). However, within this field, research has placed little emphasis on studying the career development of more vulnerable[3] segments of the population facing external barriers to their success in the working world (Devaney & Hughey, 2002; Wilson, 1996), or who experience the lack of functioning family structures which otherwise serve as models for the construction of their own families[4]. We similarly encounter the absence of theoretical models either able to effectively account for the variance existing in the outcomes of learning, self-realization and career achievements among young persons faced by vulnerabilities or to serve as reliable guides for interventions in this population group (Spokane, Fouad, & Swanson, 2003).

In practice, the majority of the traditional theoretical career development models guiding the career based practices and interventions inherently assume that persons have choices and are able to put their own volition into practice during their working lives. These models also commonly assume that the working world provides a set of options congruent with the

3 Castel (1995) proposes that the social reality is impacted by the variations in social cohesion with three broad bands in its level of variation: integration, vulnerability and exclusion. In the zone of vulnerability, within which institutionalized youths generally fall, are those experiencing precarious living conditions in terms of accessing assets and social rights, establishing transitory and discontinuous trajectories while nevertheless still retaining a place and a certain level of social recognition despite this prevailing precariousness and the thin and fragile nature of this social protection. Hence, the notion of vulnerability, contrary to the notion of risk, works with the idea that risk is produced in the relationship between the person and the context. Hence, teenage pregnancy only represents a factor or behavior of risk when the advance of pregnancy incurs problems and this does not necessarily have to happen: it may or may not happen. The vulnerability of a group to a specific situation is the result of a set of characteristics determined by the political, economic and socio-cultural contexts and how these work to heighten or dilute individual level risks. A specific determined factor may or may not leave a person in a vulnerable situation and such are always transitional and procedural.

4 A structured family may be "understood based upon the notion of the extended family defined as a group united by long lasting temporal and spatial relationships characterized by bonds of affection and mutual commitments that combine to establish the way in which the daily is lived and experienced, and thereby performing, among other functions, the role of socializing new generations (the young) who form part of this group and thereby set about building up their life projects" (Ribeiro, 2010, p. 122).

interests, capacities and specific values of individuals. On the other hand, the majority of research samples validating these models made up of middle class western individuals living in affluent consumer societies (Blustein, 2001; Bohoslavsky, 1983; Savickas, 1993), growing up in regular and structured families – thus, made up of either fathers who work and mothers who stay at home or dual career households. In summary, there has been very little theoretical or empirical study on the career development of at risk populations, vulnerable and normally facing a range of significant external barriers hindering the likelihood of professional success (e.g., poverty, crimes, violence, low academic achievements, low career self-effectiveness, among others) (Devaney & Hughey, 2002; OIT, 2009; Pochmann, 2004; Wilson, 1996), in addition to issues deriving from the lack of family structure reference models.

One example of such vulnerable populations is the children and young persons who, for whatever the countless reasons driven by the social order and personal nature, live in specific care institutions, such as Infancy and Youth Care Homes in Portugal and Shelters in Brazil. Young persons living in these institutions usually through to attaining adulthood do not normally benefit from a gradual child-to-adult transition process and furthermore lacking in a stable family network able to support in this processes. Instead, such individuals have to face up alone to the changes implicit to living more independently and without the care and support of other adults (Geenen & Powers, 2007; Guirado, 1986; Siqueira & Dell'Aglio, 2006).

In practice, some studies do indicate that, as adults, young persons who lived in homes (Portugal) or shelters (Brazil) continue to experience situations of vulnerability across a considerable number of dimensions such as unemployment or precarious employment (Abramo & Branco, 2005; Cook, 1991; Courtney, et al. 2005; Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 1998, 2001; OIT, 2009), low levels of academic qualifications (Barth, 1990; Cook, 1991; Courtney et al., 2005; Courtney, et al., 1998, 2001), early parenthood (Cook, 1991; Courtney et al., 1998, 2001, 2005), criminal activities (Courtney et al., 1998, 2005), as well as mental healthcare problems such as depression (Barth, 1990) and anxiety (Courtney et al., 1998, 2001). These young people have less propensity to complete high school in Portugal or middle school in Brazil (Avery, 2001; Andrade, 2008; Courtney, et al., 1998; OIT, 2009; Pochmann, 2004) and are correspondingly under-represented in higher education when compared with young people of their same age group living with either their own biological families or in minimally structured households (Blome, 1997; IBASE, 2007).

As research in this field has focused predominantly on the vulnerability of these young people to less favourable and less positive career paths, the

research into factors of protection for the transition to adulthood is scarce where not rare for both homes in Portugal and shelters in Brazil (Catão, 2001; Ribeiro & Ribeiro, in press; Todis et al., 2001).

One attempt to contribute to overcoming this gap in the literature was the study undertaken by Cinamon and Hanson (2005) who interviewed fifteen young Israelis exposed to vulnerable situations as regards their family and working projects and about the barriers and resources perceived as influencing their ability to undertake such projects. The results demonstrate that these young people tend to perceive working essentially as a means to earn money and only take into account a small scale of professions as being open and accessible to them. Their visions of future family, in turn, focus essentially on the capacity to provide a safe place for their children, including factors such as food and stability. These perceive themselves as the main resource for challenging the barriers and achieving projects in the future. Other resources identified relate to social support and the capacity to break from their pasts, including their family of origin and childhood friends.

These results would seem to indicate that career intervention programs with young persons in positions of vulnerability, such as those placed in institutional care, should focus both on the academic and working dimensions as well as on families. In practice, and in accordance with the recommendations made by Cinamom and Rich (2004) on preparing adolescents for working and family roles, interventions with such young people should also assume a double focus corresponding to the dichotomic perspective they hold on these two fields of life when projecting their own futures. This focus should incorporate the fostering of competences enabling young people to recognize the mutual influence between work and family as well as enabling specific competences and skills, such as conflict resolution, planning and implementing and maintaining a social support system empowering young people as they progress in their trajectories in life and engage in roles typical of adult life.

Within this framework, some authors have demonstrated that training in financial and domestic management in addition to education and job placements prove to have a positive impact on the life-chances of this population group (Barth, 1990; Cook, 1991, 1994; Pecora et al., 2006). Within this context, the study by Iglehart and Becerra (2002), as well as by Siqueira (2006), suggests the need for the continuous supervision of young persons throughout the phase of preparation, throughout the transition period and into the phase when individuals are living outside of the foster care institution.

A review of the studies on the effectiveness of young people autonomy programs undertaken by Montgomery, Donkoh and Underhill (2006) finds such programs may encourage youth achievements across the educational,

professional and domestic management fields. A recent study by Pecora and colleagues (2006) reveals that stability during the time in care, in conjunction with support services enhancing autonomy, together contribute towards good educational and professional results in the transition to independent adult life beyond the care institution.

Marques and Czermak (2008) studied the experience of groups cared for in the south of Brazil and encountered a disciplinary logic prevailing, which weakened bonds, the symbolic function and the scope and feasibility of individual and collective reflection. The authors propose team working and group practices as alternatives to this situation they considered massifying to subjectivity and to autonomy.

Velarde and Martinez (2008), in a study of 75 young persons institutionalized in the city of Lima (Peru), highlight the lack of professional involvement, the temporal location in the present and the overall lack of initiative favouring the establishment of contacts (bonds) between the young persons. They already displayed characteristics significantly hindering the construction of future goals (life projects) with the authors proposing institutions set up reflection spaces for constructing future plans as well as guidance facilities for best leveraging the potentials existing.

Arpini (2003), Vectore and Carvalho (2008) and Ynoub and Veiga (2002) all point to a need to work on experiences of the institutional bond, perceived as a space for failures, and future facing projects in order to enable the opportunity for self-realisation and personal advancement. Loss, missing and separation are not in themselves insurmountable obstacles to identity construction but rather what is important is the scope for meaning and symbolisation to transform into a strategy for self-construction of the future.

In Portugal and in Brazil, the legal system effectively guarantees that many young people facing situations of vulnerability are placed in institutional contexts (children's and young person's homes in Portugal and shelters in Brazil) and they remain there until reaching adulthood. These contexts therefore prove appropriate to this line of study and the design of career guidance interventions tailored to the specific needs of this population sample.

Within this framework, this article seeks to analyse the realities prevailing in Portugal and Brazil in terms of the characteristics of this population and the main problematic issues faced by these young people while also providing some examples of best practice in this field. We close with a critical conclusion on the aforementioned realities and identify the need and direction for future intervention and research in this field.

Caring for institutionalized youths in Portugal and Brazil: History and characteristics

This section briefly details and characterises the youth care structures in effect in Portugal and in Brazil, as well as sketching some of the aspects related to the realities of the care system, in particular as regards the results of the learning, achievement and careers of these young people.

Portugal

In Portugal, consideration of the plight of children and young people facing vulnerability above all begins in the late Middle Ages and on a broader scale during the 17th and 18th centuries. This period saw a new social, philosophic and juridical concept emerge and advocating religious institutions be founded with the objective of taking in children, and thereby rendering "legal" the abandoning of infants. More specifically, in 1783, the first institution was founded that safeguarded anonymity, and would seem designed to stem the prevailing incidence of infanticide, through the "foundling wheels", officially launched by Pina Manique, founder of the Casa Pia de Lisboa orphanage (Amado, Ribeiro, Limão, & Pacheco, 2003). On these wheels, mothers, parents, relatives or tutors would abandon children for a diverse range of reasons including the death or sickness of the mother or child, the absence of maternal milk, malnutrition or the absolute poverty of the parents.

Henceforth, institutionalisation became a strong tradition in caring for young people in Portugal. Despite the diversity in practices undertaken by institutions, in general terms, the practice of infant abandonment, indigence, and deprivation in the normal family environment, such are framed within the attempt to provide residential care. The institutions therefore take on the role of social actors in substitution of families and, in conditions involving to a greater or lesser extent of reclusion, undertake not only the moral, civic and academic education of children but also professional instruction and training in the arts and the trades.

Only later, in 1911, did the Portuguese state raise its level of concern about questions related to unprotected and abandoned minors with the passing of the Law of Infancy and Youth. Given the subsequent expansion in the framework of child protection, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved the "Convention on the Rights of the Child" in 1989 and ratified by Portugal in 1990. In 1995, the Reform of the Rights of Minors began, based upon the stipulations of the Portuguese Republican Constitution and

the international Conventions and Recommendations, focusing on the promotion of the family, the responsibilities of the state and of society in the protection and promotion of those rights. This process culminated in 1999 with the "Law for the Protection of Children and Young People at Risk", with the founding objective of "the promotion of rights and the protection of children and young people at risk in order to guarantee their wellbeing and integral development" (Art. 1 of Law 147/99, 1st September) (Alberto, 2004).

Hereafter, under these auspices, there has been an integrated approach to the rights of children and the young facing situations of vulnerability, specifying the means of exercising the state's duties in the protection of this social group and promoting their respective rights with internment becoming the last resource.

In particular, the social security system in Portugal, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity, stipulates the following contexts for the care of children and young people experiencing vulnerability:

a) Extended family care children and young people: where guardianship of the child or young person is attributed to a family member or another known person, willing and able for such purposes and technically suitable as regards integration into a familiar background.

b) Temporary care centres: centres providing care for the temporal period necessary to evaluating and defining a life project for the child or young person in danger. This emergency and temporary care lasts for a period of less than six months and provides the basic conditions and infrastructures to protect children from situations of danger.

c) Infancy and Youth care homes: temporary or permanent care facilities for children and young persons in situations of danger for a duration of greater than six months. They aim to provide a structured and familiar environment as well as the conditions necessary for the global development of the child or young people.

d) Autonomization apartment: a residence located in the local community – designed to support the transition to adult life of young people equipped with specific personal competences, through the dynamic provision of services interrelating with and leveraging resources existing in territorial spaces. This response is contextualised in institutional terms (established within the scope of intervention of Casa Pia de Lisboa, I.P.), with a quantitatively low level of impact.

All these contexts are important targets for the development of educational and career practices able to bring about positive results in terms of the academic and professional achievements of these young persons.

In practical terms, in 2009, according to the report issued under the auspices of the Plan for Immediate Intervention (PII) and produced by the Portuguese Institute of Social Security (ISS, IP, 2010), 12,579 children and young persons were identified as in situations of care in Portugal. Of this total, only 9,563 were effectively in institutional care, with the remaining 3,016 ending their period of care in this year for any of the following reasons: completed their project and moving to natural living surroundings, moved onto another response beyond the scope of the protection system, their whereabouts were currently unknown, or identified as having fled the care institution for a sustained period of time.

When we cross-reference the age range with the gender of children in care, we find there are more boys up to the age of three, a trend that reverses as the age advances and especially after the age of fifteen and through to adulthood, an age range when there are more female residents and male.

In general terms, and again according to the Portuguese Institute of Social Security (ISS) PII plan for the years between 2006 and 2009, we may identify four characteristic features of the children and young person care system in Portugal over time: “a great proportion of the universe of children and young persons in care, remain for long periods of time in the host institution, with low mobility and the number of entrances into the care system lower than departures due to the natural course of life” (ISS, IP, 2010). More specifically, analysis reveals that the children and young people remain in care for periods of greater than two years and the majority live in Infancy and Youth care homes (6,395 or 67% of institutionalized children and young people). The study of career pathways in these contexts, analysed by the same entity, has revealed results that place this population in a continued situation of vulnerability.

For example, an ISS study (2005) of young people living in Infancy and Youth Care Homes made recourse to the discourse analysis they produced on their academic options and concluded that the criteria recognised by young people for choosing a future profession are generally those associated with the options of the institution itself, whether based on knowledge about the individual's profile or on the respective family context. As regards

the type of profession and the employment of the young people interviewed, precarious and unstable forms of employment with no respondent leaving to study in higher education able to continue with their studies and some young people is working in the same institution where they were residents.

In turn, the PII data on 2009 (ISS, IP, 2010) about the level of academic achievement of children and young people institutionalized in Portugal show that: of the total of school aged children (7,981), 48% are at lower educational levels than would be expected for their age group; 706 (35%) of younger persons aged between 15 and 17 have not finished the 9th grade of education; while only 72 (7%) of persons aged over 18 attend higher education institutions. Furthermore, in 2009, 416 (31%) persons left care homes without having gained the minimum obligatory level of schooling.

We correspondingly encounter a deficit in the transition to adulthood and consequently greater difficulty in obtaining regular employment and hence in the construction of a career and autonomous life (ISS, IP, 2010).

These results would seem in line with the findings of other research projects on the life chances of institutionalised young persons. For example, Torres (1994, apud Leal, 2000:73) demonstrates that institutionalized children display a set of shared characteristics: a negative self-concept and self-esteem, academic disinterest and failure, dropping out of school without attaining the minimum level and, in certain cases, deviant and marginal behavioural patterns.

In fact, the results identified reveal that annually in Portugal, a significant number of young people attain adulthood in these institutions. At this stage, we encounter a new problematic phase with the transition to adult life independent of institutions. The legislation in effect (Law no. 147/99, 1st September) stipulates young people remain in care until adulthood or, on request, up until the age of 21. Within this scope, an important slice of the psychological literature has revealed how the development of modern societies implies changes in the nature and structure of social contexts and the lives of persons, such as expanding the length of education and delaying professional engagement and entrance into adult life (Arnett, 2004; Côté, 2000; Furstenberg, 2000). This displacement between legal stipulations and the social and personal needs in the preparation for undertaking the tasks of adult life may negatively affect paths in life, especially those young persons in care facilities.

Brazil

Similar to Portugal, care for infants and youths at risk in Brazil began with the Catholic Church through the *Santas Casas de Misericórdia* charitable institutional model and the provision of what became known as "foundling wheels", a type of entranceway on which infants could be anonymously place by those not in a position to raise them in the knowledge they would be cared for institutionally.

This model remained predominant through to the signing into effect of the Code of Minors in 1927, which banned foundling wheels and established specific institutions for caring for abandoned and delinquent children and young people within the framework of upgrading the public environment but systematised only in 1942 with the establishment of SAM (Service of Assistance to Minors), answering to the Ministry of Justice and both repressive and disciplinarian in character. In 1964, this model was replaced by FUNABEM (National Foundation for the Wellbeing of Minors), more educational than repressive in profile while still remaining a model based on interning abandoned or vulnerable children and young people as if some young delinquents.

Thus far, the care model for children and young people faced by situations of vulnerability in Brazil was assistance based with minors becoming wards of the state and a situation that only began changing with the ECA (Statute of Children and Adolescents) legislation in 1990, which proposed reclassifying these children and young persons and instead of wards of state become subjects in law through the launch of an integrated protection network, within the scope of which internment is the last recourse (Brazil, 1990).

The care system, regulated by the Judicial System and by the Social Assistance Boards, is run by the state and by civil organisations, with social control undertaken by Conselhos Tutelares (Tutorial Counsels – on which representatives of civil society sit), which were founded by the ECA to guarantee child and young person care policies at the municipal level are able to deal with situations of vulnerability.

This system contains five care contexts (IPEA, 2003):

a) Home-orphanage or residential shelter: structured as if a private residence and the property owned and run by a responsible institution, coordinated whether by parents or social workers or educators on a rotational basis and encharged with a maximum of twelve young people;

b) Republican: shared house for young people, over the age of eighteen but unable to return to their biological family and without a foster family, providing actions enabling autonomy for exiting from care, primarily through joining the labour market, but without providing any prior career guidance;

c) Temporary homes (shelters): destined to young homeless persons and with an integral range of services (healthcare, basic hygiene and safety, psychological support and social welfare), and representing a half-way house socio-educational project as the young people do not reside in the institution;

d) Care families: families taking young people into their own homes and caring for them in a system of co-responsibility with an institution and not representing an equivalent of adoption;

e) Institutional shelters: the most common form of care that, in theory, should be provisional and transitory even though the system tends to care for young people for extended periods of time. They are small-scale units with a maximum of 25 residents and designed to enable the effectiveness of personal, social and school intervention programs. This represents an environment for socialisation and not the provision of assistance but does not extend to including systematic programs in preparation for the labour market, vocational development or career counselling, which, when existing, are sporadic and fragmentary as is the case with the other training services on offer (IPEA, 2003; Juliano, 2005).

According to the most recent data released by Brazil's Ministry of Social Development, following the national survey of shelters in 2003, there were 589 shelters caring for around 20,000 children and young persons, with an average age range of predominantly between 7 and 15 years of age, of which 87% have a family and 58% remain in contact with their family of origin. Of the children in care, 95% attended school, although 16.8% were illiterate, a very high rate when considering that the Brazilian average is somewhere around 3%. In terms of gender, 58.5% are male and 41.5% are female and, in terms of ethnic background, 63% are black/brown, 35% white and 2% indigenous, with an average period of institutionalization of approximately ten years and thus clearly contradicting the transitory principle the care system is meant to render.

The main motives for ending up in the shelter are: shortage of material resources (24.1%), abandonment by family (18.8%), domestic violence (11.6%) and the chemical addiction of their parent or guardians (11.3%).

The Brazilian care system, in effect, shares many similarities with the Portuguese reality as there are long periods of stay in care and low levels of mobility.

Studies carried out in Brazil on young persons in care clearly report that their situation remains one of vulnerability and that his/her personal, social, educational and professional development is harmed on account of institutionalization and in terms of school failure, difficulty to establish bonds and self-construction and a low resource base for planning the future.

The studies of Siqueira (2006), Mello (1999) and Morelli, Silvestre and Gomes (2000) indicate the need to introduce working related issues and future planning into the care system through actions and programs in preparation for the working world alongside professional guidance, as well as courses resulting in qualifications recognised by the labour market.

In summary, the results presented to portray the results of the learning and achievement of institutionalized youths in Portugal and Brazil reinforce the appropriateness of these contexts both for the study of processes in preparation for adult life among this population and for the development of measures and programs able to foster the full development of these young persons and in better protected and socially fair conditions and actually endowing the institutionalized young with the rights of individual subjects.

Best practices for enabling the learning, self-realisation and careers of the institutionalised young

With career development representing a parallel process to the development of identity, the career based research and literature consider that early support in drafting life projects is one of the most relevance strategies and may bring more favourable results to the institutionalized young (Sousa & Taveira, 2005; Farrington, 1989; Harrigton, 1997; Hill & Rojewsky, 1999; Ribeiro, 2010).

Within this framework, Casa Pia de Lisboa, an institution with a range of young person caring responsibilities in Portugal, represents a good documented example in the specialist literature. Certainly, this institution is running a pilot-project with the objective of fostering self-awareness and vocational self-exploration, as well as competences in planning and decision making for the children and young persons living at the institution. The project was designed for different age groups ranging from infancy

through to the end of adolescence and also includes the provision of careers related training to teachers and counsellors working in this field (Correia et. al, 2010).

In effect, one of the objectives of this early intervention with at risk young people is avoiding they drop out of school, helping in nurturing a sense of commitment to education and training and guaranteeing the attitudes and skills necessary to ensure their employability in the labour market prevailing. Within this scope, various authors have set down guidelines or important recommendations that we shall now move on to consider.

For example, Pechman and Fiester (1996) maintain that for schools to prove successful in bringing about the academic achievement of these young persons, they should first carefully plan their curricular contents and seek out support and assistance in the community's administrative entities. The authors specifically state that this curricular and administrative support should result in a complete curricular for young persons and including rational thinking competences and advanced problem solving and a highly specialised teaching staff.

The Bill and Melinda Gates foundation suggests that one way of fostering the academic performance of children experiencing vulnerability, such as young institutionalised persons, is the policy of the 3 R´s: Rigor, i.e., all students need to take the most challenging subjects (e.g., writing, algebra and chemistry), Relevance, i.e., courses and projects should spark the interest of students and be clearly related with their lives, and Relationships, where all students need the supervision of an adult who knows them, cares for them and encourages them. The 3 R´s would be the "construction blocks" for a reformulate school system able to prepare students for university, for work and for citizenship (Vacca, 2008).

Within a similar framework, Christian (2003) defends how successful programs with these youth groups do need to take their educational needs into consideration. As such, a strong, cooperative and consistent relationship between the national agency for youth protection and the educational community is necessary and including the sharing of frequent information and participating in joint meetings about those in care. Finally, the same author proposes that young people should be accompanied by technical specialists responsible for ensuring the individual gets the educational services needed. Ferrel (2004), furthermore, defends how states and their respective policies should respond to the growing body of research that demonstrates that institutionalised young persons are one of the most vulnerable groups of people across various different countries. The same author adds that while the institutionalised young are not able to complete secondary school while living in institutional care, the probability that they do so afterwards

is highly remote. Correspondingly, these youths would benefit from services such as tutoring, mentoring, career guidance counselling or preparation courses for university. Furthermore, they should receive financial support enabling them to perceive university education as more accessible – such as exemption from tuition fees, for example, alongside the setting up of savings accounts and other means of assistance to ensure they are able to meet their costs and thereby provide both educational success and financial autonomy.

Reid (1999) places a similar level of importance on encouraging these young people at risk to engage in learning that proves relevant to the different areas of life, prior to the school leaving age, inside and outside the school context, through the support and implementation of directives and policies integrating the fields of education, employment, habitation, transport and culture.

Furthermore, Munson (1994) also defends the need for a change in focus and switching from academic competence training based programs to programs fostering life competences and that raises the autonomy level of young persons. In this field, the objective of career development programs should involve enhancing self-esteem, self- control, and emphasising the importance of roles in life in the professional, domestic and leisure domains. It would be correspondingly necessary to implement strategies for monitoring and accompanying these programs in order to determine their long term effects.

Eilertson (2002) refers that one way schools and social entities work together in order to improve the social and academic competences of security school students is promoting assistance services training people in autonomous living competences. According to this author, support programs for the transition to autonomous life should provide housing grants in conjunction with domestic financial management classes, thereby enabling their sustainable integration into the community.

Ferrell (2004) affirms that there is some evidence suggesting that theoretical financial management classes without daily practical experience are poorly effective. This author suggests that programs including daily cash management through debits and individual development savings may prove more effective in conveying financial management skills. Furthermore, the positive return on their behaviours, such as being able to gather together some savings, helps them in building up their own asset base. In summary, these programs enable these young people to take on important dimensions to managing life and experiencing a sense of self-sufficiency and experiencing hope about their futures.

Another example of the good policies and programs helping these young

people to gain access to equal opportunity to education success is provided by the state of New Hampshire, in the United States. In 2001, the state altered its laws to allow young persons in care to continue to attend the school that he or she attended prior to being placed in the care institution wherever the following conditions are met: continuing in the same school district is in the child's best interest, the care institution is within a reasonable distance of the school, and appropriate means of transport may be accessed without incurring additional costs for the school district or the state child welfare entity.

Furthermore, according to a study by Avery (2002), in order to attain academic objectives such as improving the graduation rates of young institutionalised persons and boosting their level of school success, schools should deploy attention to identifying the barriers to student learning to guarantee that all children have an equal opportunity to success at school. Any such focus requires schools create a policy committed to establishing an "empowerment component" to education that supports those students most in need. The author continues by affirming that schools should not only undertake a framework of core program areas but also establish infrastructures for restructuring and improving the existing resources alongside remedial education programs and other academic support services to better meet the needs of this student group.

Meanwhile, Lima and Strazzieri (2007) point to a need for career counselling work with the institutionalised young and perceive this work as a systematised education process with the objective of setting up the conditions for these young people to draft their life projects and implement their career plans.

Career guidance and counselling is also reflected in the theoretical models of learning experience processes proposed by Moscovici (1985) and the technical foundations of the social-historical model (Bock, 2002) and necessarily engaged in as a group.

The lived process should consist of a cycle of four sequential stages, with specific and interdependent objectives. (1) An activity stage, in which the group experiences a situation through means of participation in an activity (problem solving, drama, gaming simulation); (2) The analysis state, in which there is reflection on the activity in terms of the results and the processes utilised to attain them; (3) Conceptual state, in which knowledge is built up on the experience (socio-cognitive approach); and (4) Connection stage, in which the experience just encountered is related to experiences lived in practice in daily life and with the general objective of encouraging the making of future plans.

Career counselling would be an environment for engaging in an intermediation between the precariousness of the knowledge and the basic resources available to young persons and the construction of their autonomy and subjectivity through a lived process of learning.

Ribeiro and Ribeiro (in press) highlight how the specialist literature approaches the institutional disconnection of institutionalised young persons who have been offered almost no assistance in breaking down their identity of failure and institutionalisation and building up a socially recognised identity, such as a professional identity. In general, the actions existing tend to favour programs resulting in qualifications that bear little relationship with labour market realities or the provision of occupational opportunities that are subsequently lost through a lack of planning and preparation, transferring to the young person a stigmatised identity of institutionalisation that later deteriorates through under-qualification and unemployment.

Faced by this situation, Ribeiro and Ribeiro (in press) put forward professional guidance as one feasible strategy for overcoming institutional disconnection and make a proposal based on the Activation of Vocational and Personal Development strategy advanced by Bujold, Noiseux & Pelletier (1981). This involves getting individuals involved with themselves and the opportunities available in the world through short sequential activities and activating such possibilities and transforming them into opportunities to join the labour market. The core activity proposed is the idealisation and construction of a company project involving all the facets involved in such a task and basing this activity on the project building methodology in effect in the working world whenever professional career trajectories do thus demand. Through a project undertaken in the present, it proves correspondingly possible to integrate three temporal stages of life (past, present and future) and restore a meaning of life through the operational implementation of concrete opportunities in action in the world.

In summary, the literature does testify to some examples of best practices designed to boost the learning, achievements and careers of institutionalised young people. However, these represent sporadic results and isolated in the literature and there are very few accounts of the effective success of these practices.

CONCLUSIONS

As the general conclusions to this article, we may identify the following ideas:

- Educational and career interventions prove fundamental to the definition of the life projects of these young people faced by situations of vulnerability.

- The career counselling and guidance services for this vulnerable population group should include career planning and decision making, academic advising, mentoring, social skills development, study skills training, college access facilitating, and assistance with school and college completion and financial aid application as well as domestic management (Arbona, 2005).

- Enabling the adaptation of institutionalized young people to the working world should incorporate counselling and supervisory services with the objective of bringing about the construction of professionally focused projects. These services may foster these goals through, and for example, nurturing pro-active individual behaviours, stress management, and stimulating the feelings of self-efficacy, especially concerning these young people's beliefs about their ability to adapt and change their way and position in life and construct a career narrative of meaning to the individual and socially legitimate (Griffin & Hesketh, 2005; Savickas et al., 2009).

- The Portuguese and Brazilian literature and policies on this field contain some reports of best practices but restricted to particular contexts and, furthermore, insufficient in scale to alter the statistics demonstrating the fairly unfavourable career paths faced by these young people.

- Investment in defining and characterising the career based needs and difficulties experienced by young persons living in Infancy and Youth Care Homes in Portugal and in Shelters in Brazil is fundamental to regulating, based on consensus based and generalised approaches, the educational, organisational and career based interventions in this population group.

- The design of interventions with these young persons in situations of vulnerability involves the training of professionals capable of applying research and the career development practices in this particular field and thereby facilitating career exploration and planning from infancy through to young adulthood, encouraging and strengthening the educational progress of these young people. This necessarily involves vocational guidance processes and career counselling by other persons holding meaningful roles to this population group, such as mentors, teachers and social assistants, in order to provide these young people with relevant social role models (Lima & Strazzieri, 2007; Ribeiro & Ribeiro, in press; Skorikov & Patton, 2007).

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Training and performance systems of psychology professionals: the particular case of career guidance and counselling

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This chapter sets out a reflection on the problematic issues bound up with the learning and professional performance of psychologists dedicated to career guidance and counselling activities. In practice, we defend the crucial importance of quality theoretical-practical psychology training to attaining excellence in the professional performances of psychologists. Thus, we correspondingly analyse the scope for training systems to generate the opportunities truly favourable to the acquisition, training and development of the diversified set of core and specialist competences necessary to this field. We furthermore observe how the structure of psychology based higher education is organised in Portugal before concluding on the subsequent implications for the training of future career guidance and counselling professionals.

Keywords: *training, performance, psychology, guidance, career counselling*

Career guidance and counselling have been consolidated as a professional field over the course of recent years in accordance with the strategic objectives handed down by the different international policy agendas (e.g., the Lisbon Summit, 2000; OECD/EC, 2004). Their systematic integration into a range of policy documents reflects the progressive advance of a globalised society requiring rising standards of competitiveness. The authorities in different countries have correspondingly opted in favour of the massification of the career intervention services available to citizens irrespective of their sex, age, race or ethnic background, level of education or professional position. Career guidance and counselling now represents a right to any citizen alongside those other rights such as universal and equal access to education and employment (e.g., Nieto, Pérez-González, & Riveiro, 2011).

The ultimate objective of vocational interventions is to bring about, in conjunction with the individual citizen, the design and implementation of his/her life projects (Andrade, Meira, & Vasconcelos, 2002). Such projects should reconcile, on the one hand, the individual and personal citizen characteristics, thus in terms of interests, values, competences, and objectives in life. On the other hand, this process should equally take into account the currently prevailing economic, political and social reality, and its respective impact on the nature of work, professional relationships, the conceptions of success, satisfaction and wellbeing, and in actually assuming personal responsibility for the career management process (e.g., Lassance, Melo-Silva, Bardagi, & Paradiso, 2007). Furthermore, throughout this process, clients need to be encouraged to carry out an ethical questioning of their respective life projects. This questioning incorporates a deep and thorough reflection, and subsequent integration, of the characteristics, beliefs, expectations, needs and objectives of the more significant others, into their personal projects, as well as, the impact of the objectives and decisions inherent to the significant others and to society in general. This is carried out within the framework of the ultimate objective: contributing to a society that seeks to be ever fairer and more equalitarian (Pinto et al., 2011; Taveira et al., 2010).

These new challenges posed to career intervention processes justify both the importance of and the need for targeted and systematic investment in developing Vocational Psychology, and its distinct methodologies, techniques, strategies and intervention and research instruments. This is all designed to enhance better individual adaptation to the sharp and sudden changes taking place in the labour market and the subsequent new career realities resulting.

In exemplification of this paradigm shift, we may highlight how the concept of career has changed over the course of the 20th century and beyond with new conceptions such as the protean career (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall

& Moss, 1998; Mirvis & Hall, 1994), boundaryless (Arthur, 1994; DeFillipi & Arthur, 1994; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), intelligent careers (Arthur, Claman, & DeFillipi, 1995), and career anchors (Schein, 1996). This runs in parallel with the development of new theories and models such as career construction (Savickas, 2005), the career well-being model (Lent, 2004), and more recently the life-design model (Duarte et al., 2009; Savickas et al., 2009). These more recent developments directly attempt to convey and to integrate the current complexity of working lives undertaken within contexts increasingly experienced as dynamic, unstable, unpredictable, and incurring dramatic consequences for the processes of designing, constructing and managing life/career projects (e.g., Pinto, 2010).

Furthermore, we should also consider how such new challenges also generate a set of demands as regards the education and training of career guidance professionals and very much to the detriment of these new career needs and realities encountered by their clients. While vocational orientation had hitherto been considered a punctual process, in the main associated with adolescence and the choice of higher education studies, profession or employment and in accordance with a rational and mechanised alignment process between personal characteristics and profession requirements, it remained understandable how concerns relating to the training of career guidance professionals were of secondary importance. However, given the high profile attributed to career related information, guidance and counselling processes within contemporary society, different authors come out in support of an urgent need to develop and standardise the directives underpinning minimum theoretical-practical training and professional performance quality standards for this field (Lassance et al., 2007; Melo-Silva, 2003).

Professional career guidance and counselling performance levels: the relevance of quality theoretical-practical training

The changes wielded on the organisational world in particular and on society in general drive an essential rethinking of the objectives, the scope, the techniques and the intervention strategies in conjunction with vocational research so as to be able to meet the current career needs of individuals. In turn, these changes in the spectrum of vocational guidance result in an essential need to update and revise the education and training of professionals engaged in this field. In the generality of cases, practice proves rather different to theory given that the characteristics currently defining the world and society are not always taken into consideration when training the ranks

of graduates that annually head out of universities and into the workplace (Sarriera, 1999). In effect, in some cases, there is abysmal correspondence between the contents acquired in the classroom context and those skills and competences required for effective and efficient professional performances in terms of appropriately identifying, intervening, researching, and evaluating socially relevant problems and issues (Joly, 2000). Just as Oliveira (1999) stresses, “it is as if we educate psychologists for a world that does not exist and we do not prepare them for that existing” (p.81).

Concern over the issue of professional psychology training quality and, in particular over vocational guidance professionals, has been recurrent over the years. Thus, there is a diverse range of researchers (e.g., Andrade, Meira & Vasconcelos, 2002; Cruz & Schultz, 2009; Guzzo, 1999; Faria & Taveira, 2009; Hiebert, 2004; Lassance et al., 2007; Melo-Silva, 2003; Nieto, Pérez-González, & Riveiro, 2011; Rafael, 2004; Soares & Krawulski, 1999; Talavera et al., 2004) who have emphasised the importance of defining the criteria for excellence in the rendering of career guidance and counselling services alongside setting down international criteria for the training of such professionals even while duly safeguarding the specific national, regional and local characteristics, associated with the economic, political, cultural, historical and educational framework of professional engagement (e.g., Lassance et al., 2007; Talavera et al., 2004). In fact, the main idea conveyed by these specialists is that vocational guidance professionals should, above all other circumstances, provide services with a clear hallmark of quality with such an objective only feasible when based upon high level academic and professional training equally characterised by its benchmark quality standards.

In 2001, the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (AIOSP; http://www.iaevg.org/IAEVG/), in its “Declaration on Educational and Vocational Guidance”, defined a set of directives for a quality focused service orientation. Some of the key points defended in this document include universal access to these services, respect for the diversity and specific characteristics of each client and problematic framework, as well as professional ethical conduct throughout the process of intervention. However, the main highlight of these directives lies in another of its core points that forms a prior condition to the aforementioned points and deriving exactly from the training, accreditation and continual learning of career guidance professionals. As regards this proposal, despite lacking great detail, the document does advocate the need for the supervised training of competences, professional performance subject to systematic evaluation and constant updating of skills and knowledge in accordance with the continuous lifetime learning principle (Jenschke, 2003).

Themes surrounding the academic and professional training of psy-

chologists in general and vocational guidance professionals in particular, display direct implications for questions about the visibility, credibility and recognition awarded the profession (Faria & Taveira, 2010). Currently, we still encounter some difficulties in clearly and appropriately identifying the objectives, content, knowledge and minimum competence requirements to be taught, acquired and proven throughout the processes of graduate and post-graduate psychology/vocational psychology study programs (McCarthy, 2004; Soares, 1999). This situation would seem to explain how, on joining the workplace, psychology professionals, despite their basic training in the majority of cases displaying high levels of demand and quality, do not hold the competences necessary to answer the specific problems encountered within the guidance framework. Consequently, we very often find such professionals succumb to the temptation of addressing and seeking to meet the personal needs of their clients within this field and without any knowledge on the actual causes in accordance with the main theories, models, methodologies, techniques, and research and intervention instruments for this field simply because they did not take any elective subject related with this issue (e.g., Antunes et al., 2009; Soares, 1999). Situations such as these may be the cause of the particular stigma that Portuguese society holds towards career guidance professionals. There is a general perception that such professionals not particularly able to engage with their functions and hence limit their scope of action to the administration and interpretation of psychological tests and based upon which they make an adjustment between the client's own characteristics and the demands of professions and workplace contexts (Andrade, Meira & Vasconcelos, 2002; Oliveira, 1999).

The training of psychology professionals is the responsibility of higher education institutions and hence the lecturers and researchers at work in such contexts are responsible for teaching and preparing their students. However, such responsibility also extends to the respective professional and scientific associations and institutions that corresponding with holding the duty for regulating access to the profession may also ensure that such access and continual learning are undertaken according to the highest of quality standards. In these terms, many authors would seem relatively unanimous about the need for vocational psychology professional training to range across three different facets: a) core theoretical education in the foundations of psychology, b) a deep and advanced level of theoretical training in life/career information, guidance, counselling and management, and, c) a practical and supervised training internship (e.g., Rafael, 2004; Repetto, Ferrer-Sama, Hiebert, Manzano, & Gelván, 2005).

Theoretical psychology based training should be focused on the knowledge, reflection and discussion around the main historical landmarks in

the field as well as the respective leading theories, models, and intervention and research instruments available to the general field of psychology. Some of the core subjects pointed out as fundamental to basic, theoretical training include, and for example, clinical psychology, development psychology, education psychology, organisational psychology, social psychology, and psychotherapy (e.g., Andrade, Meira & Vasconcelos, 2002; Soares & Krawulski, 1999).

High level, advanced theoretical training in life/career information, guidance, counselling and management should focus on the knowledge, reflection and discussion prevailing on the main theories, models, techniques, strategies and instruments deployed in this field in conjunction with information and experience on their respective characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, similarities and differences, as well as their levels of effectiveness and efficiency. An approach, for example, to the history and the core theories of vocational orientation, associated with thorough knowledge on the current characteristics of the labour market, patterns of employability, and the different opportunities posed by the diversity of educational, training and professional paths, should also be included in the curricular structure (Lassance et al., 2007).

Finally, supervised practical training should be undertaken through intensive curricular and professional internships. These, taking place in real working contexts, with duly defined learning objectives (e.g., the evaluations of needs and contexts, identification and contextualisation of the client's problematic framework, constructing, implementing and evaluating career management programs), incorporate a time span appropriate to the respective set learning objectives and goals. Within this framework, students gain the opportunity to participate in multidisciplinary teams and observe and train the practical application of their theoretical knowledge and competences in population groups displaying different characteristics, needs and requirements (Melo-Silva, 2003).

Despite the overvaluation of theoretical training, this does not, in and of itself, guarantee that the professional on joining the working world is apt for turning in good service performances (Crespo, Gonçalves & Coimbra, 2001; Cruz & Schultz, 2009). In reality, in the majority of cases, student levels of preparation prove insufficient for competent engagement with the profession and hence resulting in opinions that curricular training programs should foster a broader range of such practical opportunities than is currently the case and designed to enhance practical individual capacity building (Joly, 2000; Müller, 1999). Correspondingly, a study undertaken by Melo-Silva (1999) with students on internships at the Professional Guidance Service, of the Centre of Applied Psychology, of the Faculty of Philosophy,

Science and Letters, at the University of Ribeirão Preto, reported the level of utility and relevance attributed to the internship experience for the acquisition of competences and skills deemed of importance to psychological guidance and counselling. Thus, 82% of students responding (n=9) reported a favourable evaluation of the internship and its utility in the acquisition of core competences to professional performance, with around 48% classifying this experience as "highly relevant". The practical worth of this training would appear to particularly derive from the acquisition of competences for group counselling (88%), as well as for individual counselling (66%) and the application of those psychology instruments appropriate to guidance practices (66%).

To these three factors, some authors have since added a fourth bound up with questions of personal development (e.g., Lassance et al., 2007; Soares & Krawulski, 1999). Within these terms, there is particular emphasis on the extent to which the guidance professional is duly clarified and self-resolved and comfortable with personal and career decisions. Hence, the professional correspondingly requires an intense level of self-knowledge and awareness (e.g., interests, values, competences, life styles) also extending to their own career development and capable of identifying objectives in terms of career decisions as well as the strategies necessary to attaining them. Furthermore, they should be ready to integrate the decision to become a career guidance professional into broader reaching life projects. Some authors state that only thus does it prove possible for the professional to clearly and effectively deal with the uncertainties, insecurities, and conflicts that the clients bring with them into guidance counselling sessions (Andrade, Meira & Vasconcelos, 2002; Bohoslavsky, 1993; Vera, 2001; Soares & Krawulski, 1999).

Beyond graduate and post-graduate education in the guidance profession, continuous training should also be high on the agenda in accordance with the principle of lifelong learning. Any working context nowadays demands of its participants a constant level of updating (Müller, 1999) as regards both their knowledge and the skill-sets. This demand becomes still more of an issue when such professionals have responsibilities in terms of processes supporting and developing the life projects of other persons out of an awareness that these projects always have to take into consideration not only specific client characteristics but also the organisational world and all against the backdrop of the respective historical, cultural, political, educational and socially contextualised era. As Nieto, Pérez-González and Riveiro (2011) and Oliveira (1999) refer, for this very motive, training should be understood as an unfinished process within which the initial academic preparation is but the beginning. Continuity may be rendered through regular attendance of post-graduate programs, short courses, seminars, conferences,

and discussion groups, and as well as remaining in frequent contact with the specialist literature in the field (Silva, 1999). Hence, in these terms, there are indications that career guidance professionals, out of greater awareness about the shortcomings present in their own academic and education backgrounds, spontaneously seek out these opportunities to engage in professional lifelong learning and development opportunities. Through meeting their own training needs, they are thus better able to ensure a professional performance with far higher quality standards (Nieto, Pérez-González and Riveiro, 2011).

The professional performance of career guidance and counselling psychologists: the role of competence focused training

Despite the concerns over the objectives and content of vocational psychology graduate and post-graduate curricular programs, in truth, whilst these facets are not especially well defined then again neither are the actual competences that future professionals need to acquire over the course of the academic and professional period of preparation. These competences and skills extend beyond the theoretical knowledge that individuals acquire and develop over the course of their education and training to the extent that they also incorporate their capacity to effectively deploy this same knowledge in applied contexts (Bronckart & Dolz, 2004, in Cruz & Schultz, 2009). Consequently, and as detailed by Cruz & Schultz (2009), young professionals may have a degree certificate testifying to their academic and scientific knowledge in a particular domain but this does not necessarily mean that they have in the meanwhile acquired the competences necessary for professional engagement. Hence, the actual existence of a certificate does not always directly relate to the holding of specific skills.

A review of the literature on the basic and fundamental competences necessary to appropriate and effective professional practices identifies a diverse set of opinions on this theme. Hence, from the outset, we should differentiate between the two main research clusters setting out answers to this issue.

At the international level, in 2003, the AIOSP approved a document entitled "International Competences for Educational and Vocational Guidance Professionals" (IAEVG, 2003), which puts forward two groups of competences requiring acquisition by any professional with the intention of undertaking interventions in the field of career guidance and counselling. Correspondingly, there is an initial list of eleven core competences described as basic and common to all guidance professionals irrespective of specific

characteristics arising from the working context. These competences include, but are not necessarily limited to, the capacity to demonstrate appropriate ethical behaviour, knowledge on career development processes throughout the entire life cycle and the actual circumstances prevailing in the working world (for example, employment trends and social questions), the capacities to incorporate and apply theoretical and empirical contributions to guidance practices as well as planning, implementing and evaluating intervention programs in this domain. These come in addition to factors such as relating and communicating effectively with others and displaying attitudes reflecting understanding and respect for social and intercultural awareness alongside the professional humility to recognise one's own capacities and corresponding underlying limitations.

The second list details the specific specialist competencies directly related with the working context, the target participants of the intervention and the respective specialist professional field. These are divided up into ten different fields: a) diagnostic/evaluation, including the capacity to conduct the necessary client and context evaluations and apply the results generated in developing appropriately effective and satisfying career interventions, b) educational orientation, including the capacity to provide support for fostering self-awareness, knowledge about advanced training opportunities and decision making, c) career development, that covers, among other aspects, knowledge about the main stages, phases and states of career development from a life cycle perspective and about the micro and macro contexts to decision making processes, as well as competencies in terms of planning and implementing intervention programs designed to meet the needs present in specific population groups, d) personal counselling, which incorporates the capacities necessary to supporting clients in advancing with their personal life projects, and in preventing and resolving personal problems, referring individuals to other specialist professionals and services whenever so necessary, e) handling the information, which consists of knowledge on the respective legislation in addition to the capacity to deploy diverse resources to obtain qualifications of educational and professional relevance, f) consulting and coordinating, including the capacity to create and maintain the due levels of interpersonal relationships, effective communication and conveying an appropriately professional image, g) research and evaluation, covering the capacity to plan and implement research projects and utilise the results to the benefit of continuous professional practice improvement h) supervising and managing programs and services, including the capacity to manage working teams and leverage the resources relevant to ensuring exceptional performance levels in the professional field, i) community development and empowerment that extends to, beyond other aspects, the

capacity to identify needs as well as the resources existing in the community and thereby implementing projects bringing about empowerment, and, j) insertion into the labour market, involve a range of competences related to the provision of support to the client in seeking out, obtaining and maintaining employment (Faria & Taveira, 2009; Repetto, et al, 2004; Talavera, et al., 2004; Ureta, 2008).

In turn, in the Canadian context, at around the same time, the *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners* (2004; National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards, 2001) were put forward. This model of the standards required for professional practice also takes a dual approach, dividing up into core competences and specialist competences (Plant, 2004). The core skills are organised into four domains: a) professional behaviours (e.g., adhering to an ethical code of conduct and self-commitment to one's own professional development), b) interpersonal competences (e.g., respect for diversity, the capacity to interact and communicate effectively), c) knowledge about career development (e.g., recognising the main phases and stages in developing lifelong careers), and, d) evaluating the needs and pathways (e.g., identifying the needs and referring clients to other sources of support able to appropriately overcome the shortcomings presented). In turn, there are six fields of specialisation and their respective competences. These specialist fields are: a) evaluation, including the capacity for carrying out client evaluation, b) facilitating individual and group learning, including knowledge on the strategies suitable to fostering learning both in individual and in group contexts and situations, c) career counselling, including knowledge about and experience with the counselling methodologies and techniques appropriate to the field), d) information and resource management, covering the capacity to source information on the educational, training and professional worlds and render it accessible to clients and endowing them with the skills necessary for researching and interpreting this same information, e) undertaking the role, involving among other factors, the capacity to orientate clients in applying for, securing and retaining employment and, f) community development and empowerment, including the development of community-based partnerships with the objective of bringing about their development. In addition to the core competences all vocational professionals should hold, irrespective of the context of professional engagement, some additional skills and competences that fall within each one of these six areas of specialisation.

Any comparison between these two lists of competences arriving from either side of the Atlantic Ocean first verifies the extent of the similarities rather than the differences. The Canadian model presents, and similar to

that of the AIOSP model, a clear distinction between core and specialist competences (Plant, 2004). However, we would highlight how in the former an unparalleled emphasis is attributed to the code of ethics and professional conduct, which, beyond being included in the core competences of career guidance professionals, plays a fundamental role as the foundation stone for developing both the core and the specialist competences. Furthermore, in accordance with that previously stipulated by AIOSP, we find that the model from Canada emphasises the balance between the core and the specialist competences, with the need for specialist competences focused very much on the demands of the context and the target public in conjunction with the scope of intervention developed within the framework of providing an effective response. As regards the actual competences pointed out by each one of the models, they also display some shared commonalities. Detailed analysis of the core competences proposed by the two models suggests there had been greater concern on behalf of AIOSP to specify just which general and basic competences are required by vocational guidance professionals. In contrast, the model proposed by the Canadian team is more generalist, with its competences structured into four broad fields and providing few clues as to which specific competences actually make up each of these domains. Consequently, this more generalist categorisation may perfectly well serve as an organiser for the competences set out by AIOSP and therefore resulting in a single model displaying greater complexity and depth. For example, the competences of "appreciating and taking into account the cultural differences of counselling participants enables effective interaction with diverse populations" and the "capacity to deploy appropriate language for communicating with colleagues and clients and thereby ensuring efficient communication levels" (IAEVG 2003, in Ureta, 2008) may be classified under the framework of the "interpersonal competence" field (Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners 2004). In turn, and as regards the specialist competences, we also verify how many of the competences proposed within the scope of each model actually overlap. However, in this case, the competences put forward by IAVEG may be considered as an organisational framework for the competences proposed by the team from Canada due to the fact that they are broader reaching in scope. Hence, there would seem to be perfect interlinkage between the specialist competences developed by Canada and the ten competences presented by AIOSP. However, we should also stress how the categories "educational orientation", "personal counselling", "consulting and coordinating" and "research and evaluation" find no similar correspondence in the list of specialist competences drafted in the Canadian context.

Based upon these and other documents referring to the basic skills and

competences that a career guidance professional should be in possession of, some authors have sought to identify just which competences are valued and to what extent by students and professionals opting for the vocational guidance and counselling profession. Recently, Cruz and Schultz (2009) carried out a study with this objective of evaluating the respective importance levels attributed by a sample of 102 psychology professors, interns and professionals. Displaying the capacity to retain confidential client information (100%), working in multidisciplinary teams (87.3%), assuming responsibility for the results of their works (87.1%), demonstrating interest in continuing to learn about the field of psychology (86.3%), self-expression with objectivity, coherence and clarity (86.3%), utilising psychological theories in their professional practices (85.3%), and demonstrating knowledge about the code of professional ethics (85.3%) were found to be the competences deemed most important and essential to professional practice across this particular sample. In a similar fashion, an earlier study undertaken by García, Reina and Lopez (2005) focused on the competences most valued by vocational guidance students. They reported that such competences included, among others: a) social and interpersonal competences, b) personal problem prevention and resolution, c) identification of the needs of the target-population through the deployment of multiple evaluation methodologies, d) utilisation of information deriving from evaluating needs for developing psycho-educational interventions, e) development of education projects that enable professors to improve their teaching methods and thereby enabling students to overcome their respective difficulties, and, f) knowledge about human development.

In turn, the study carried out by Antunes et al. (2009) sought to deepen this theme through their analysis of a sample of 63 Brazilian professionals, in the majority psychologists, not only as regards the relevance and the need they attributed to certain specific competences being included within the scope of professional guidance orientation but also for their self-evaluation on the efficiency of the preparation they received during their respective periods of training. To this end, they applied the Questionnaire for Evaluating the International Competences for Vocational and Educational Guidance Professionals (Repetto et al., 2004), which is, in turn, designed to evaluate the range of core and specialist competences defined by IAEVG. The results indicate that 90% of professionals consider the core competences are either relevant or very relevant and as many as 80% expressed satisfaction or great satisfaction with the training they obtained during their educational processes for the development of these competences. As regards the specialist competences, with the exception of community development and empowerment, they are all found to be very relevant to their practice. Fur-

thermore, the relevance they are attributed is always greater than the level of effectiveness attributed to evaluations of their own training during the course of their academic preparation and thus confirming a discrepancy between training and the real needs at the level of professional competences (Antunes et al., 2009).

This approach, integrating the different core and specialist competences presented in such distinct contexts, as well as this detailed analysis as to their respective relevance and the effectiveness of the training processes attributed by students and professionals in the field, may prove worthwhile to the extent it fosters and enables the identification and definition of the main guidelines for organising curricular programs that currently integrate the training opportunities for future vocational guidance professionals (Lassance, et al., 2007; Moreno, 2006).

The particular case of Portuguese psychology career guidance and counselling higher education

In Portugal, the attributes assigned to professionals in this field are, among others, the following: (a) “supporting students in developing their personal identities and life projects”, (b) “planning and implementing education and professional guidance activities at the individual and group level”, (c) “cooperating with other services, especially through the agreement of protocols, taking into consideration the organisation of professional guidance information”, and, (d) “developing information and awareness actions among parents and the broader community in general as regards the problems inherent to educational and professional options” (from the General Directorate of Curricular Innovation and Development, the Ministry of Education; http://sitio.dgidc.min-edu.pt/pt). Within the framework of these and the other demands faced by professionals, analysis about where and how the training and preparation of career guidance professionals takes place in Portugal becomes imperative. The objective is to verify whether the academic and professional training currently available suitably and appropriately prepares future professionals for the functions and activities attributed to them.

The information presented in table one was sourced from the site Access to Higher Education (http://www.acessoensinosuperior.pt/), of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education and thereby identifying the institutions with undergraduate degree (1st cycle of studies), master’s degree (2nd cycle of studies) or integrated master’s degree programs in psychology. These institutions, totalling 32 in number, were subsequently categorised according to their university or polytechnic and public or private statuses in accordance with the following categories: state higher education university (no.=12), private higher education university (no.=19), and private higher education polytechnic (no.=1). Subsequently, we consulted the respective Internet site of each higher education institution to analyse the respective Psychology programs and identify the curricular units existing on career guidance, counselling and management.

Thus, as regards the state higher education university category (no.=12), there are a total of eight undergraduate programs (1st cycle), 2 master’s degrees (2nd cycle) and 4 integrated psychology master’s degrees. As regards the undergraduate degrees, only the University of the Algarve (Vocational Psychology) and the University of Beira Interior (Vocational Development Psychology) include curricular units specifically dealing with career guidance and counselling. In the former case, the curricular unit is obligatory in the 3rd academic year while only an elective in the latter case. The universities of the Algarve (Educational and Professional Guidance) and Madeira (Personal and Vocational Development) run Master’s Degrees in the Psychology of Education, with compulsory curricular units of this type in the 4th year. As regards the four Integrated Psychology Master’s Degrees at the universities of the Minho, Oporto, Coimbra, and Lisbon, a diverse range of career guidance and counselling subjects were found. These curricular units generally fall beyond the scope of the first cycle of studies and when found at this level are among the elective options. In the 2nd study cycle, these curricular units are associated to the specialist field/branch of academic and education, are obligatory in nature and generally occurring in the 4th year of study (e.g., University of Oporto, Vocational Guidance Psychological Consultancy; University of Coimbra, Models and Theories of Vocational Behaviour).

As regards the private higher education university category (no.=19), we accounted for a total of 18 undergraduate degrees (1st cycle), eight master’s degrees (2nd cycle), and one integrated master’s degree in psychology. As regards the undergraduate degrees, ISLA - the Higher Institute of Languages and Administration of Gaia and Leiria (Educational and Professional Guidance), the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the Catholic University of Portugal (Psychology of Education and Lifelong Learning I and II), Lusíada University of Oporto and Lisbon (Vocational Selection and Orientation), Lusófona University of Oporto (Psychology of Vocational Development and Seminar on Educational Psychology and Vocational Guidance), and Portucalense Infante D. Henrique University (Intervention in Vocational Psychology and Entrepreneurship and Career Management) integrate some curricular units relative to career guidance and counselling. Of these units,

the majority are taught in the 3rd year of the degree and are compulsory subjects. The exception to this is ISLA Gaia and Leiria where the Education and Professional Guidance subject forms part of the second year of the study program. The D. Afonso III Higher Institute (Educational and Professional Guidance), the Higher Institute of Intercultural and Transdisciplinary Students of Almada and Viseu (Vocational Orientation, Career Development and Life Project I and II), the Higher Institute of Maia (Models of Vocational Guidance and Psychological Intervention in Vocational Guidance), the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Portugal (Vocational Exploration and Development I and II), the Fernando Pessoa University (Psychosociology of Educational and Professional Guidance), Lusíada University of Oporto (Education and Vocational Guidance), and the Lusófona University of Humanities and Technology (Vocational Development), run master's degree programs in psychology with such curricular units included into the 4th year of study. In the case of ISPA's Integrated Master's Degree in Psychology, we identified the Vocational Development and Guidance curricular unit, an elective option.

Finally, as regards polytechnic higher education (n=1), there was but one example, ISCET polytechnic's Undergraduate Degree in Social and Working Psychology, incorporating the Vocational Guidance and Professional Counselling curricular unit, a compulsory final year subject.

In summary, we may affirm that the majority of undergraduate degrees (1st cycle) do not contain any career guidance and counselling curricular units. The degrees containing units falling within this field are generally taught at private higher education universities and tend to be obligatory and final year subjects. As regards the master's degrees (2nd cycle), all those subject to analysis focus on the educational psychology field and hence incorporate career guidance and counselling curricular units into their structures, generally both compulsory and right in the 1st year of the course. Finally, as regards integrated master's programs, they all have at least one of these units among their compulsory subjects. The majority, however, provide other units within this scope among their range of elective options. Thus, in total, we identified a total of 41 career guidance and counselling units, thirteen at the undergraduate level (two in state higher education institutions and eleven in private higher education institutions), seventeen master's program subjects (two in state higher education institutions and fifteen in private higher education institutions) and eleven on integrated master's degree programs (ten in state higher education institutions and one in a private higher education institution).

We should furthermore highlight the existence of cases, as detailed in table one, when the psychology program of a specific institution not only

does not have compulsory career guidance and counselling units but also does not include such units among its elective options. However, we should nevertheless take into account the possibility that within the extent of some subjects that do not specifically deal with career guidance issues, they may approach themes with implications and relevance for this field. This is believed to be the case for subjects entitled "Psychological Counselling" (University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro), "Personal and Academic Development Seminar" (University of Évora), or "Complex Models of Decision Making" (Manuel Teixeira Gomes Higher Institute). This situation could not, however, be ascertained in any great detail as the program contents for each respective curricular unit are commonly not provided on the respective higher education institution's Internet site.

Another situation that deserves clarification refers precisely to such difficulties in accessing program contents for the various curricular units. In Portugal, and across the different higher education institutions, there does not seem to be any significant track record in publishing subject program content on the Internet. For such reason, this hindered our efforts to make comparisons between what was actually being taught and the recommended knowledge and competences necessary for the theoretical and practical training of future professionals capable of engaging in career guidance and counselling clinical practice. Of the 32 higher education institutions analysed, only three public institutions (University of Coimbra, University of Lisbon and the University of Oporto) and three private institutions (Lusófona University of the Humanities and Technologies, Lusófona University of Oporto, and ISPA) ensure their program contents are available for on-line consultation.

Analysis of the information available would indicate that in terms of psychology's theoretical foundations, the broad majority of these curricular units do not stipulate any prerequisites for enrolment with the exceptional of the Vocational Behaviour Models and Theories subject (University of Coimbra), which recommends the prior acquisition of basic knowledge on developmental psychology, the social sciences and psychological evaluation. Taking into consideration that the majority of these subjects are taught within the framework of the 2nd cycle of studies, we might therefore assume that students already hold knowledge about general psychological intervention and research acquired in the first psychology study cycle. However, given the 2nd cycle of studies is open to students from other educational fields, this situation should in no way be assumed. As regards advanced and deep reaching theoretical training, we find that there is a fairly heavy emphasis on grasping the pertinence of information, guidance, counselling and individual life/career management within the framework of the prevail-

ing economic, political and social circumstances; on knowledge about the different theoretical and paradigmatic models in Vocational Psychology; on understanding the diverse range of intervention methodologies and strategies within this field and dependent on the respective different contexts, populations and problematic issues; as well as on experience of both the intervention techniques and strategies in real or simulated contexts, and the qualitative and quantitative research methods applicable to this field. In general terms, lecturers tend to opt for expositional based teaching techniques for presenting more theoretical content and complemented by dynamic teaching practice incorporating strategies as diverse as staging individual and group exercises and works, the discussion of practical case studies and the collection and analysis of audiovisual material.

Hence, and from the analysis undertaken, we find that the higher education and training in career guidance and counselling of Portuguese psychologists would seem to fall within the scope of international level best practice reflecting high-level theoretical and practical teaching standards. However, we should emphasise that any conclusion regarding the education and preparation of vocational guidance professionals in Portugal proves of limited validity given that we were only able to access the program content of 25% of the total career guidance and counselling curricular units.

CONCLUSION

The present chapter sought to reflect on a set of questions under the auspices of educating and training psychology professionals, in terms of their preparation for intervening and researching in the fields of informing, guiding, counselling and managing life/careers. Firstly, we analysed the respective relevance of high quality theoretical-practical training of these professionals, based upon a full theoretical grounding in psychology and deep and wide reaching theoretical training in vocational psychology related themes alongside supervised clinical practice. We then proceeded to discuss the importance of both the program objectives and content and whether such curricular units are structured in accordance with international best practices on the acquisition, training and development of the diverse range of core and specialist competences required by this field. Finally, we set out an overview of career guidance and counselling professional training in Portugal and finding that the majority of future psychology professionals do not attend any curricular unit specifically approaching career guidance and counselling during their basic academic education (1st cycle of studies) with such subjects frequently integrated into the 2nd cycle of studies and

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fields of knowledge related to the educational and school psychology.

Taking into consideration what has been set out throughout this chapter, we would point to the relevance of deepening this line of research in Portugal in the near future. We currently face a distinct scarcity in theoretical and empirical studies, and both nationally and internationally, focusing on issues related to psychology professional training and education and in particular studies dedicated to intervention and research on the specific field of career guidance and counselling. The undertaking of more systematic research in this field might contribute towards improving the training systems for professionally intervening in this field. Similar to reflections in earlier studies, such research projects might, for example, focus on the actual content currently being taught to future professionals and what similarities and differences, advantages and disadvantages exist between the different procedural norms in effect in each country and between different countries, the relationship between the training provided these professionals and the demands subsequently made upon them; and, what perceptions the professionals themselves hold about the quality and utility of the training received within this scope.

In the near future, we would attach equal relevance to investing similar resources in reviewing and eventually restructuring the current career guidance and counselling education and training system. Such a process could and should base itself on the aforementioned research taking into account how training able to meet the needs identified correspondingly strives for high quality levels. In the current models, we encounter an overall lack of curricular units focused on this field across the different cycles of study and the higher education institutions contemplated. Together, the diversity and specific nature of needs, clients and contexts and the intervention models, techniques and strategies justify the integration of theoretical-practical based curricular units able to nurture the acquisition, training and development of specialist competences for this field from the very outset of higher education academic training. Additionally, we would also call for greater involvement in the development of post-graduate programs, short courses, workshops and conferences able to bring about the constant updating of professionals acting in this field and correspondingly focusing on the most recent developments in career guidance and counselling research models and intervention paradigms.

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Table 1: The Portuguese higher education system of career guidance and counselling psychology

Higher Education	Institution	Study cycle	Curricular unit
Public University	ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL)	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes neither compulsory nor elective CUs
	University of the Azores	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	No access to study program
	University of the Algarve	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Vocational Psychology (3rd year/1st semester)
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Education, Professional option	Educational and Professional Guidance (1st year/2nd semester)
	University of Aveiro	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
	University of Beira Interior	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Vocational Development Psychology (2nd year elective)
	University of Évora	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes neither compulsory nor elective CUs
	University of Madeira	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Education (2nd cycle)	Personal and Vocational Development (1st year/2nd semester)
	University of Trás-os-Montes	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes neither compulsory nor elective CUs
	University of Coimbra	Integrated Master's Degree	Models and Theories of Vocational Behaviour (4th year/2nd semester)
	University of Lisbon	Integrated Master's Degree	Higher Education Adaptation and Personal Development (1st year/2nd semester elective) Vocational Psychology (4th year/1st semester, branch of the Psychology of Education and Guidance) Guidance Psychology Evaluation (4th year/2nd semester elective, branch of the Psychology of Education and Guidance) Vocational Counselling (5th year/2nd semester elective, branch of the Psychology of Education and Guidance)
	University of Minho	Integrated Master's Degree	Practicum in Vocational Evaluation and Intervention (4th year/2nd semester, branch of School and Education Psychology) Advanced Questions of Vocational Development (4th year/2nd semester, branch of School and Education Psychology) Vocational Development Psychology (3rd year/2nd semester elective)
	University of Oporto	Integrated Master's Degree	Vocational Guidance Psych ological Consultations (4th year/1st semester, branch of Psychological Intervention, Education and Human Development) Lifelong Vocational Guidance Psychological Consultations (4th year/2nd semester, branch of Psychological Intervention, Education and Human Development)

Table 1: The Portuguese higher education system of career guidance and counselling psychology (cont.)

Higher Education	Institution	Study cycle	Curricular unit (CU)
Private University	Higher Institute of Healthcare Sciences - North	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
	D. Afonso III Higher Institute	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Education (2nd cycle)	Professional School Guidance I (1st year/1st semester) Professional School Guidance II (1st year/2nd semester)
	Higher Institute of Intercultural and Transdisciplinary Studies – Almada	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Development and Education (2nd cycle)	Vocational Guidance, Career and Life Project Development I (1st year/1st semester) Vocational Guidance, Career and Life Project Development II (1st year/2nd semester)
	Higher Institute of Intercultural and Transdisciplinary Studies – Viseu	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Development and Education (2nd cycle)	Vocational Guidance, Career and Life Project Development I (1st year/1st semester) Vocational Guidance, Career and Life Project Development II (1st year/2nd semester)
	ISLA - Higher Institute of Languages and Administration of Gaia	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Educational and Professional Guidance I (2nd year/2nd semester)
	ISLA - Higher Institute of Languages and Admini stration of Leiria	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Educational and Professional Guidance I (2nd year/2nd semester)
	Higher Institute of Maia	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
		Master's Degree in School and Educational Psychology	Vocational Guidance Models (1st year/1st semester elective) Psychological Intervention in Vocational Orientation (1st year/2nd semester elective)
	Manuel Teixeira Gomes Higher Institute	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
	Miguel Torga Higher Institute	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
	Luís de Camões Autonomous University of Lisbon	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no comp ulsory CUs
	Catholic University of Portugal, Faculty of Education and Psychology	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Psychology of Education and Lifelong Learning I (3rd year/1st semester) Psychology of Education and Lifelong Learning II (3rd year/2nd semester)
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Education and Human Development	Vocational Guidance and Career Development (1st year/1st semester)
	Catholic University of Portugal, Faculty of Philosophy	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Education	Exploration and vocational development I (1st year/1st semester) Exploration and vocational development II (1st year/2nd semester)
	Fernando Pessoa University	Undergradu ate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Education and Community Intervention	Psycho -sociology of Educational and Professional Guidance (1st year/2nd semester)
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Work and Organisations	Managing People and Competences (1st year/1st semester) Psycho -sociology of Educational and Professional Guidance (1st year/2nd semester)
	Lusíada University, Lisbon	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Selection and Vocational Guidance (3rd year/2nd semester)
	Lusíada University, Oporto	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Selection and Vocational Guidance (3rd year/2nd semester)
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Education	Educational and Vocational Guidance (1st year/2nd semester)

LEARNING, ACHIEVEMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Table 1: The Portuguese higher education system of career guidance and counselling psychology (cont.)

	Lusíada University, Oporto	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Selection and Vocational Guidance (3rd year/2nd semester)
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Education	Educational and Vocational Guidance (1st year/2nd semester)
	Lusófona University of the Humanities and Technologies	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Includes no compulsory CUs
		Master's Degree in the Psychology of Education	Vocational Development
	Lusófona University of Oporto	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Vocational Development Psychology (3rd year/1st semester) Educational Psychology and Vocational Orientation Seminar (3rd year/2nd semester)
	Universidade Portucalense Infante D. Henrique	Undergraduate Degree in Psychology (1st cycle)	Vocational Psychological Intervention (3rd year/1st semester) Entrepreneurship and Career Management (3rd year/2nd semester)
	ISPA – Higher Institute of Applied Psychology	Integrated Master's Degree	Vocational Development and Guidance (4th year elective)
Private Polytechnic	ISCET– Higher Institute of Business Sciences and Tourism	Undergraduate Degree in Social and Working Psychology (1st cycle)	Vocational Guidance and Professional Counselling (3rd year/1st semester)

Sources: Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (Access to Higher Education: http://www.acessoensinosuperior.pt/, 2012) the Internet sites of each of the aforementioned institutions

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The importance of vocational psychological training: intervention strategies and the (self)-evaluation of professional performance levels

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This article first sets out to explore the perspectives and understandings of the vocational psychology training and education system and correspondingly focusing on its shortcomings and difficulties from both the theoretical and the practical points of view. We then proceed to analyse the processes of career counselling and vocational intervention and correspondingly providing a brief reflection on the most recent changes in the field of Vocational Psychology, especially as regards the skills and competences required for engaging in and evaluating vocational-based interventions. Finally, we seek to clearly portray the strategies available for the (self)-evaluation of professionals and the constant monitoring of their performances in the vocational field.

Keywords: *training psychologists, vocational intervention, professional (self)-evaluation*

We may currently observe how professional success is directly related with the personal abilities of individuals. Thus, Vocational Psychology seeks to understand just which skills and abilities are applied in the field of employment chosen by individuals. This approach simultaneously questions how individuals (with their abilities still undergoing transformation) position themselves as regards the difficulties encountered in the respective professional careers. Hence, based upon the phenomena bound up with that understood as globalisation, which have been amplified on a daily basis by technological innovations, the mass media and the overall macroeconomic conjuncture, we find this framework has stimulated the emergence (and also the disappearance) of professions and thus driving career instability (Pereira, 2008). According to Pereira (2008), this process has generated:

> "an opportunity for strengthening and expanding the field of vocational counselling thereby opening up the opportunity for students and professionals in Psychology and related fields to broaden and deepen their knowledge on the role of Vocational Psychology, seeking to advance their professional capacities for carrying out vocational counselling and career intervention" (p.457).

Analysing this process from a historical perspective, Herr (2008) presents a broad vision of vocational counselling dating back to late 19th century. He identifies the founding of the field of Vocational Psychology as taking place in 1909 when diverse theories were set out in conjunction with a series of techniques. He furthermore identifies how initially career guidance was specifically focused on young persons and adolescents, thereby defining (quantifying and subsequently evaluating) its scope of action and correspondingly orienting the field towards future professions. Subsequently, we encounter the technological advances and the Internet of the late 20th century and becoming a bridge for further globalisation of the 21st century's economies. This macro perspective, according to Herr (2008), drives a constant perfecting of the quality and correspondingly broadens career interventions taking into consideration the constant changes demanded by an increasingly globalised labour markets. Hence, Leitão and Paixão (2008) focus especially on the role of women in the workforce and the sociocultural impact of their boundless roles as mother, partner and worker.

Moreno (2008) throws a spotlight on how vocational orientation takes on an educational facet that ceases to be a secondary activity produced by a school system. Instead, the objective becomes the way to prepare students to gain a better understanding about what they are working on and continually learning. The same author also sets out the strategies and methodologies

necessary for the implementation of vocational education throughout the school learning process without, however, mixing the roles of psychologist and teacher. Given this process, we may similarly grasp how the training of the vocational counselling professional has also undergone change. Based on this logic, Leitão and Paixão (2008) analyse the role of the counsellor in the perceptions held by the young persons and adults on the prevailing contexts, within the framework of their professional challenges and personal limitations. They also highlight the need for vocational counsellors to identify and guide the significant moments in the dynamic relationship between personal and professional identities and, especially, in adult phases when individuals experience disruptions in their careers and including when going into retirement. In summary, we consider that vocational psychology serves as a tool for professional guidance associated to the performance of other roles within a context of client security and wellbeing.

Nevertheless, there remain outstanding questions on the training of psychologists as vocational counsellors. Are the psychology based training and education programs focused on this dimension? Lima (2010), quoting Fávero (2002), analyses university education in general and especially the internship and finding there is an immense hiatus between the early years of education (theoretical) and the internship (practical), thus hindering (Psychology) student reflection processes on their professional (and vocational) training.

Another relevant aspect derives from the role of psychological evaluation in career related counselling interventions. Duarte (2008) highlights the standards in effect for their preparation in terms of both theoretical justification and professional ethics, stressing the need for professional awareness and knowledge about how to correctly apply the instruments inherent to such practices. Duarte furthermore identifies the diverse test categories and specifies how they should be deployed in career counselling before finally affirming that the objective of vocational psychology is not so much about helping in professional development but rather about the self-awareness and personal satisfaction resulting in a better quality of life.

Finally, this article also explores the level of understanding about the vocational psychology training and education system. We analyse career counselling processes and the means of intervention within the framework of contributing towards reflecting about the changes in the field of vocational psychology in accordance with the Portuguese reality. We furthermore aim to convey the strategies designed for both the (self)-evaluation of professionals and the constant monitoring of professional performance levels.

The importance of vocational psychology training

As identified by various authors (Blustein & Spengler, 1995; Krumboltz, 1993; Niles & Pate, 1989; Tolsma, 1993), as professionals, psychologists seek to understand human behaviours and should be correspondingly able to recognise and grasp personal preferences irrespective of their specialist field. They should also aim to understand the interactions between the vocational and non-vocational dimensions to the lives of their clients and thus strive to broaden their specific knowledge and competences in accordance with the complexity posed by each client. Throughout their education and training, psychologists should also reflect on and question the values, techniques and practices that are handed down by university curricula and imposed by the educational system in effect in the respective country. Furthermore, according to Lima (2010), during the preparation process for professional practice, when this questioning of the rules and conducts should prevail, taking on a critical attitude towards the professional future does not effectively align with academia to the extent that curricula, in their majority, do not build "bridges" between the respective theoretical, ethical, critical and practical aspects to the profession. This thereby hinders deeper and broader analysis of their respective professional competences.

To achieve this, we need to engage in a rapid rethinking (at least in the case of Brazil) of some of the facets to psychology based education especially as regards some of the shortcomings common to psychology degrees, for example, in the organisational, educational, sporting, forensic and vocational terms.

In the vocational field, we believe that interventions designed to integrate this facet pose psychologists with major challenges given they leave professionals more exposed to the limitations of their own training. In addition, from the ethical perspective, we understand that such vocational intervention option of integrating the professional and human facets may leave psychology more unprotected. This greater exposure stems from the lack of support from specific theoretical conventions and regulatory codes of conduct and hence having to self-define legitimacy criteria based upon the decisions taken and their respective professional practices.

Understanding the development of competences and evaluating vocational interventions

According to Nascimento and Coimbra (2005), among the many difficulties in decisions generally related to work, those situations falling within the vocational scope, prove potential sources of crises in the intra-psychic or interpersonal relationships of the individual. However, these situations also boost the perspective of how the individual's psychological level of development may prove an important factor to success in dealing with the problems and tasks inherent to vocational development. Through this analytical process, we believe that vocational problematic frameworks emerge associated with the difficulties posed to personal development, emotional perturbations and specific relationships. We therefore correspondingly understand the new responsibilities taken on by psychologists intervening in vocational related processes involve providing answers to client needs that reach out beyond the vocational scope while also striving to provide a structured reflection on the psychological facets.

At a particular point in time, there thus emerged new conceptions and practices for Vocational Guidance. They focus attention on those objectives and methodologies more closely centred on the overall working dynamics of persons and on new conceptions of intervention and thereby bringing about a change in focus in terms of the traditional vocational intervention, and incorporate, for example: aptitudes, interests, vocational choices and career planning.

We also observe how this new orientation generates a clear contrast with the more traditional vision of vocational consultancy and its approach as merely a punctual, short and rational process, inseparable from psychometrically analysing the level of client complexity and from a cognitive perspective on the training and professional realities (Nascimento & Coimbra, 2005).

Thus, expectations about vocational intervention practices restricted to specific professional training projects (technical or university training) for individuals have tended to disappear. Today, we are aware of the existence of diverse influences in terms of the choices made by individuals in various different contexts and domains of existence (Campos & Coimbra, 1991a; 1991b; Imaginário & Campos, 1987; Super, 1990), and thus placing the emphasis on the psychological processes preceding any change in the variables of a person's respective life.

Taking into consideration this perspective focuses upon the psychological subject, without ever ignoring the vocational behaviours present in so many facets of human experience, it is the role of the psychologist to work with the most subjective individual demands and motivations, different

to those one encounters in the framework of more traditional and almost standardised practices of Vocational Guidance. Hence, psychologists need to reflect on the consequent implications of this decision making not only for themselves and their clients but also for the intervention process itself (Nascimento & Coimbra, 2005).

In fact, there may occur situations in which the evaluation of a relevant vocational problem does not in itself cause serious psychological problems to the client. However, there are also other instances when it proves impossible to ignore the relevance of personal problems, especially when such are amplified by the vocational issue. Within this scope, Nascimento and Coimbra (2005; cit. in Lucas, 1992), present a comparative study of the vocational and non-vocational problem types displayed by clients and set out evidence that vocational issues do not exist in isolation to other concerns (and including the psychological) held by the individual. In another research project, Anderson and Niles (1995) also verify how over a third of client concerns are bound up with problems of a non-vocational nature, especially difficulties in terms of interpersonal relationships and emotional disturbances. Hence, vocational psychology should carry out thorough evaluations of the psychosocial workings of their clients (Davidson & Gilbert, 1993; Dorn, 1992).

According to this hypothesis that the personal facet is able to directly influence the vocational trajectory of a client, some authors (e.g., Dorn 1992; Nascimento & Coimbra, 2001) identify a need to ascertain to what extent certain personal resources are susceptible to mobilisation by the professional intervention in order to expand the client's development and performance levels and both in terms of vocational tasks and in his/her own intervention activities. In this way, intervention would seem to necessarily require an approach to the totality of the client's personal system whether through personal issues potentially causing vocational dysfunctions or through vocational related issues triggering personal crises and even in cases where personal-vocational interactions are predominantly positive and constructive.

Thus, any understanding on the overall psychological development of the client, according to Nascimento and Coimbra (2005), ends up raising important questions and including: up to what appoint should non-vocational dimensions be explored? What intervention problems should be prioritised? At what point is the referral of the client to a professional more competent in the field of psychotherapy justified?

As regards intervention related questions, Nascimento and Coimbra (2005) propose that "Vocational Guidance professionals may opt for one of three possible departure points: the client request in accordance with how this is submitted, client problem(s) as evaluated by either the professional,

or by the actual client".

Where vocational guidance begins based on the client, we understand that the intervention does not seek to be anything beyond responding to the type of request submitted by the client. The psychologist, in this case, opts to approach solely vocational aspects without any concern for evaluating or intervening at any other level apart from those key to the client's request. Thus, deliberately or due to a lack of information, the client is dealt with exclusively in vocational terms.

A second departure point for vocational processes begins when the intervention extends to include a technical evaluation within which the professional seeks to work non-vocational dimensions to a vocational problem. Hence, the intervention tends to incorporate fields other than the vocational based request, with the psychologist deciding in accordance with the client's needs or the characteristics of each problem type encountered within the course of appropriately extensive interventions. This needs to identify, in function of its analysis, the origins and drivers of the problem as well as the characteristics of dimensions making up problematic situations and that require immediate intervention work. Psychologists may also deem it appropriate to involve the client in a psychotherapeutic process taking place in parallel with the vocational intervention. The professional thus seeks to expand the process or suggesting to the client immediately afterwards just how the vocational problem might be resolved. This should also accumulate alongside the responsibility for approaching the intervention's non-vocational aspects and adjudging whether or not appropriate to refer the client to a professional better qualified in the field of psychotherapy.

A third approach stipulates the client as the point of departure. Within this perspective, the professional defines the form of intervention, attributes priorities to clients favouring individualised transformation within the framework of the (re)signification of their experiences and learning backgrounds and striving to provide a thorough reflection on their memories, motivations, feelings, beliefs, concerns and identities. This furthermore takes into consideration the contexts of lives and analyses the interrelationship between all these factors.

However, according to Kelly (1991), the attention psychologists pay to the initial client request does not seek to maintain a linear relationship between the nature of the request and the characteristics of intervention but primarily reflects on the acceptance and valuation of the actual client as an individual.

The option of an integrated approach to all the subjective experiences of an individual, as such are expressed in vocational behaviours, ensures that vocational consultancy acquires a pre-eminently psychological and holistic

dimension. The psychologist seeks to intervene in the psychic workings of clients, without incurring fragmented conceptions of problems, while remaining alert to variations and reformulations of the initial request and seeking to correct the direction of intervention in keeping with the personal and contextual reality of the client.

(Self)-evaluation strategies of vocational professionals and ongoing monitoring strategies

Having analysed the diverse aspects of evaluation and self-evaluation of the vocational field, we encounter the reluctance of these professionals as regards psychological grading in relation to vocational intervention. Certainly, this evaluation does not fall beyond the scope of professional socialisation processes taking place during years of training (Krumboltz, 1993; Manuele-Adkins, 1992; Warnke et al., 1993).

The training and educational curricula of future psychologists generally distinguish and segment the practices of Vocational Guidance from the practices of Psychotherapy and not always resulting in situations fostering the acquisition of knowledge better able to grasp vocational development or of relevance to the training (during the internship) of intervention competences positive to the integration of vocational and non-vocational issues. Hence, even when convinced of the advantages to clients of integrated interventions, professionals perhaps do not always feel prepared or positioned to successfully assume an approach containing such characteristics. Probably, and according to Lima (2010), the expectations (or fears) of a professional as regards their future profession, and especially in terms of their own competences, are perceived by this learning process as excessively low and hence there is no understanding as to the sufficient levels of professional competences able to provide continuation to intervention processes when these point to therapeutic based objectives.

According to Nascimento and Coimbra (2005), the majority of clients making recourse to vocational psychology expect a range of qualifications that enable the effective dealing with and working out of any problem or dimension to problematic situations arising in their area of training or the general field of behaviour in which they are specialists. Of course, such expectations may be influenced by aspects associated with the professional reputation of the psychologist or the prestige of the institution for which the professional works. Nevertheless, a large majority of clients expect minimum levels of competences in core, essential areas from all psychologists. However, of the psychologists, it may not be expected that they do not ques-

tion their own myths (and limitations) as regards their practices and do not constantly seek quality in their professional activities.

However, we should highlight that in vocational intervention processes, there are facets of ethical responsibility that should not be attributed any secondary level of priority. While Vocational Guidance professionals may or may not intervene when their clients display personal problems interfering in their vocational development, this depends on the professional vocational psychology resources they have to help their clients in approaches tailored to the respective prevailing needs. Nevertheless, when professionals in this field cannot balance non-vocational questions with the context of vocational intervention, this does justify the referral of the client to a better qualified psychotherapeutic professional.

Hence, the experience of psychologists in this process may enable them to develop more favourable attitudes to vocational intervention, challenging their own beliefs, limitations and difficulties regarding both what the individual expects from psychotherapy in each case and the choice of the most appropriate (and broad reaching) intervention strategy for the client. This naturally all has to take place without ever overlooking the importance and meaning of work in the life of every person.

CONCLUSION

Given the complexity of vocational related problems, we understand that at the beginning of any vocational intervention process, the psychologist stands out as the actor taking the most important decisions on structuring the intervention. Given clients display (in the majority of cases) a set of not always particularly realistic expectations as regards the vocational process, there is also no complementary and clear understanding of their problems that would enable immediate decision making on their respective needs (Nascimento & Coimbra, 2005). Hence, the role of psychology is to help the client grasp how the vocational/professional dimension is inseparable from other personal dimensions. We maintain that interventions contribute towards clients giving up on efforts to separate their professional life off from their personal spheres thereby preventing the formatting of a negative dualism in identities (Dorn, 1992).

Nevertheless, the help provided to the individual may prove compromised to the extent of how during problem analysis, the psychologist restricts the scope to the client's original request and not bringing about a confrontation (and revision) of client assumptions and limitations as regards their current and future expectations.

To this effect, the professional vocational orientation should duly recognise the utility of evaluation in intervention practices and not only for generating access to knowledge on the real intervention needs of each client but also for evaluating their own respective needs in terms of reflection and the changes possible as regards their professional actions and roles (Nascimento & Coimbra, 2005).

Hence, as regards the professional engagement of the psychologist within the scope of vocational psychology interventions, we would again agree with Nascimento and Coimbra (2005), who also stress the role of evaluating the potential scope for psychotherapeutic intervention within the framework of the process. This proves necessary to the extent the intervention treatment of symptoms proves able to reduce or resolve the vocational displacement registered by the client.

This reflection (and its effective application), at least in Brazil, does correspond to existing concerns given the majority of psychology training programs in the country contain content strongly prioritising a clinical focused posture.

Finally, we also believe that this vocational perspective may also serve as the foundations for a series of learnings and insights into individual psychism with that integrated into identity structures influencing the entire scope of self-understanding about overall behaviour patterns. Thus, we agree with Blustein (1987) who points out how analysis of client vocational behaviour may open up access to clinical information and psychological diagnosis and which would otherwise not be available were the professional to focus only on evaluating the psychological symptoms.

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