Abstract

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

Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Work mean time</th>
<th>Company mean time</th>
<th>Function mean time</th>
<th>Function change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62 (100%)</td>
<td>46 (64.5%)</td>
<td>16 (25.5%)</td>
<td>29.73</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>22.49</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>79.06</td>
<td>0.372</td>
<td>37.61</td>
<td>40.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedures

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

Results

Based on the answers given in the questionnaire completed by the 62 subjects, we obtained approximately 330 responses. The analysis of these resulted in a total of 439 record units which were categorized as showed in Table 1.

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

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

Question 3, Why the enrollment in the seminar, more often displayed responses in the education category (36), in particular, self-application (23) and in the category planning (38) more specifically, plan of action (17). Less frequently in the category management of life roles (1) and adaptability(1). There were no responses in subcategories goals, skills, anticipated consequences, personal and employment.

Question 4, Doubt held, has a higher frequency in the planning category (27), influence (18) specifically in the motivations subcategory (14) and category self awareness (17). The frequencies of other sub-categories have similar values between themselves with no differences in distribution or absence of answers.

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

Discussion

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

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

Bibliography


