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1 ABSTRACT

Abstract: The Career Guide For Schools is a Comenius 3 European network, which was co – financed by European Commission and end up on September of 2008, after three years of life span. The main aim of the project was to bridge the gap from school to the world of work. The specific objectives concern the development and publication of a handbook of Effective Career Guidance, which will become a useful tool for career counsellors every day life. The Handbook includes a report for career counselling status in Europe nowadays, activities and exercises for career counsellors and theoretical and pedagogical background of these activities. The research material and activities have been structured in three (3) thematic areas which cover the field of career guidance (1) self development, (2) information about he labour market, (3) planning the career path. All the activities have been implemented and evaluated in several schools (80) of our network through Europe.

The CG project expanded the activities beyond the traditional career guidance and developed a section of five sessions of career counselling for rural areas, via internet access, meeting the special needs of students living in rural areas. In the framework of the CG project, was organized also an in service counsellors' training seminar at Rhodes Island for a week (8-13 July 2008). Fifteen Career Counsellors from different European countries, exchanged ideas, methodologies and approaches for career counselling. The main aim of the training seminar was to present the career counselling status in different countries and participants to exchange ideas, approaches and best practices for relevant issues.

2 INTRODUCTION

The 'new era' of information and knowledge which is characterized by unexpected and rapid changes in technology and in the labour market often shocks individuals who feel lost and vulnerable in the midst of the flux created around them causing insecurity and anxiety. McLuhan (McLuhan, 1964) has already suggested that we live in 'an anxiety era', whereas Giddens (Giddens, 1994) uses the term 'manufactured uncertainty', which has been developed in the last four decades and needs to be analyzed in the context of globalization. In this context, that is, in the process of connecting the local with the global, through the new methods and channels of communication, new forms of uncertainty and risk are emerging and anxiety is intensified. According to Habermas (Habermas, 1987), the extension of interaction in the time-space context may lead to further anxiety which creates a sense of loss. Rapid changes in multiple contexts (educational, socio-economic, cultural) often invalidate predictions and 'investments' one makes for one's future and cause disappointment, insecurity and anxiety about the uncertainty which seems to be a dominant characteristic of today's world. Giddens

(*ibid*) supports the argument that globalisation creates new forms of uncertainty and new kinds of social stratification.

The sense of uncertainty can be even more intense for young people who try to build their future and have to deal with an unknown world of work, full of changes and various educational and occupational dilemmas.

The demands of the labour market have multiplied in terms of skills (especially technological), experience, flexibility and mobility. Getting a job is a basic step towards becoming fully integrated in society. But today's young people are concerned not only with avoiding unemployment, but also with finding a job that offers some satisfaction. They realize that employment is a key factor of social cohesion and the basis for financing social and intergenerational solidarity. The transition between school and work is filled with obstacles and young people are becoming more depended economically. The area which significantly influences and will more and more influence the harmony between education and labour market is the area of career education and counselling. There is no part of life where the need for guidance is more empathic than in transition from school to work--the choice of a vocation, adequate preparation for it, and the attainment of efficiency and success.

At present, we may state insufficient transformation of career counselling to new socio-economic conditions, to crucial changes in the world of work. The career guidance in education sector has a principal significance not only for the choice of educational career of pupils and students but also for the transition of school-leavers to the world of work. It increases the probability of their success, interest in further education and will of retraining, that means, the preparedness for change of employment.

Studies of guidance and counselling programs, reports by the business community, and feedback from parents have raised concerns that many young people do not have the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to make a successful transition from school to the world of work. Career planning is not instinctive. The educational system must provide to students information and taught basic knowledge, skills and attitudes to facilitate a smooth journey from adolescence to adulthood. Life career development is self-development over the life span. It occurs through the integration of the roles, settings and events in a person's life. The word "life" in life career means that the focus is on the total person -- the human career. The word "career" identifies and relates the roles in which individuals are involved (worker, learner, family member, citizen), the settings where individuals find themselves (home, school, community, workplace), and the events that occur over their lifetimes (entry job, parenthood, job change, retirement). Finally, the word development is used to indicate that individuals are always in the process of becoming.

According to the concept of life career development, it is practically unthinkable to prepare young people for their life of work without occupational exploration. This is accomplished through the student's school subjects and extra curricular activities with the help of parents, teachers, friends and representatives of the world of work and the community. This way of proceeding not only allows the students to explore who they are but to explore their surroundings. Thus, the students can be exposed to a whole range of occupational opportunities, establish a relation between their personal characteristics and those of occupations, and acquire more information about the knowledge, skills and values required in the world of work.

The life career development of young people should be a process of planned intervention whereby educators, parents, government agencies and community members work together to provide students with hope for the future and to empower them to believe in themselves. Young people need help to

keep their eyes open for opportunities in the world that will allow them to fulfil their values, beliefs and interests and to reach their fullest potential.

In Europe, there are various differences in the career guidance interventions. These include, for example, differences between educational systems with strong early-streaming and tracking mechanisms and those with more flexible pathways: guidance services tend to play a more important role in the latter than in the former. They also include differences between countries in which most public services – including career guidance services – are delivered by the state or state agencies, and countries in which there has been a strong policy to deliver services through the private and voluntary sectors wherever possible (Kosmidou-Hardy,2005).

School vocational programs that are comprehensive and proactive are more often successful. A comprehensive school vocational program includes a guidance curriculum which is the shared responsibility of teachers, counsellors, parents, and community members. It is particularly important for schools to take advantage of vocational guidance services providing up-dated information on the labour market, on occupations and training opportunities, as well as information on possibilities of using one's intellectual and personal potential, according to individual interests.

Reviewing all the above mentioned facts one could conclude that it is absolutely necessary for actors implicated in the educational system to empower students to acquire the knowledge, skills, information, and attitudes to understand and positively enhance their own life career development. Young people must be prepared to cope with the changing trends of our days, by having the capacity to be resourceful, adaptable and flexible amidst change and ambiguity. It is in this context of constant change that adolescents must make decisions regarding their life careers. Cooperative efforts of the school, home and community are needed to help young people successfully make the transition from school to the world of work.

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Career awareness has to be an integral part of the comprehensive career guidance program in schools. Developing a positive attitude towards careers can show children that the future is theirs for the taking. Opening their eyes to the possibilities of what they like and what they might like to do, is exciting. Career development is a life long process. It is the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economical and choice factors that combine to shape a young person's life. In order to help guide young people in their career paths, the CareerGUIDE for Schools network promote career education as a central theme in all schools through experts' collaboration in order to offer substantial and complete orientation to school children as well as to those who support them in this process.

The CG network brings together experts in pedagogy, psychology, technology, labour market, teachers and students. The partnership of the CareerGUIDE for Schools network form collaborative working-groups throughout the entire network's lifetime. The working-groups include different-subject scientific experts, sharing the same interest in researching a specific aspect of career guidance (e.g. competencies and skills, psychological factors, ICT tools as means of guidance, standardization and quality issues, teachers training and professional development).There are three working groups which indicate the main areas or steps of career guidance, adopted at the career counseling at schools. The first working group, titled "Find out about yourself", concerns the personal development. Personal development is a long life process, is an essential hard continuous process, vital part in the

procedure of Career Guidance. Actually helps pupils to understand and articulate all aspects of their personality, helps pupils to make specific plans for a stable future achievement and connects their emotional, educational and the vocational aspects of self. At last but not least helps pupils to clarify their strengths or talents, their weaknesses and their “will” and then helps them to find the appropriate educational and occupational environment, according to their personal values. For Career Guidance Personal development is student’s first step in a long life path, in a path of realizing and acting. That’s way we give great importance at the development of life skills. With the term of “life skills” we mean Communication skills, Career Design skills, Decision making skills, Problem solving skills, Leadership skills, Time management, and Information skills.

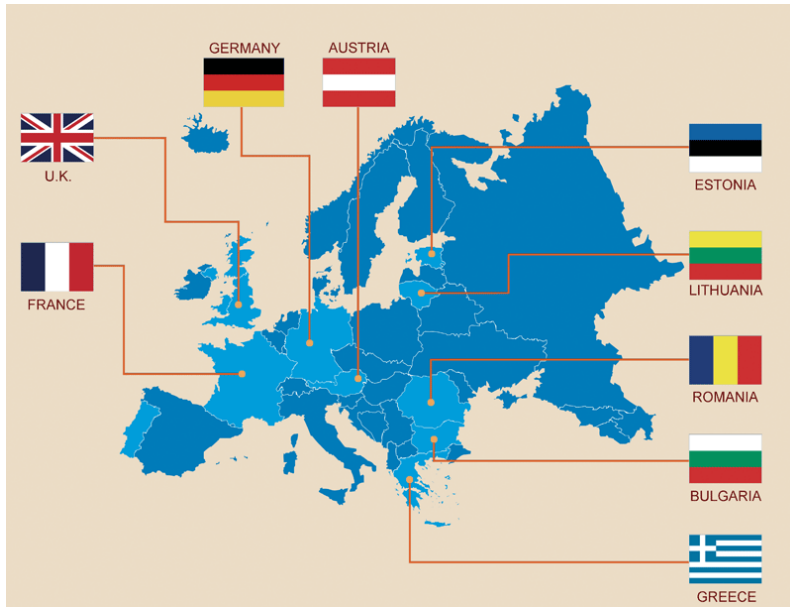
Apart from any educational or occupational choice a successful transition from school to college or university and then to a workplace, demands strong life skills. These are the skills that will make the difference and guarantee a successful vocational and personal life.

Various exercises and activities have been collected or created concerning the identification of personal traits, and then have been implemented in schools, in order to choose the best practices that a teacher/ counsellor can use and the same time help effectively pupils.

The second working group includes the area of information and has as a title “Find out about the job market”. The part of collecting significant educational and occupational information it is a very important step at the process of career guidance. Actually the educational options, specific job description, the every day life of professionals, duties and rights are some of the questions that a pupil has to face. Concerning the rapid and repeated changes in the world of work mostly, but and in the educational field too, the demand of accurate information is becoming unsustainable. For example, a lot of pupils have in their mind a specific occupation but actually they do not know a lot of details that concern it, such as the difficulties, the perspectives, how they can obtain that title.etc. In many cases when pupils learn more details and information about the job that are interesting, change their mind and confess that they had something completely different in their mind. In a world of continuously changes, where in ten years there will be jobs that nowadays we can even imagine; the constant need of information for the new trends of the labour market is necessity.

The third group titled “Develop yourself for your career path” concerns exercises and activities which help individual to develop personal and life skills and to make right educational and occupational choices. Actually pupils learn to deal with every day dilemmas and to make choices according to their beliefs, values and dreams. In Career Guidance, to make the right decision is a process that mostly concerns the responsibility of choosing the individual by himself, according to personal criteria. In this framework, there are a lot of exercises and activities adapted to pupils’ every day life, which bring pupils front of dilemmas and ask them to make a decision.

The Career Guide project developed a large network in whole Europe with schools and other relevant organisations and institutions. Seventy two (72) schools in different countries through Europe joined CG network. All exercises and activities were implemented in those schools and were evaluated. The best of them, with the better evaluation were collected and presented at the Final Handbook “Report on Effective Career Guidance”.



In the framework of “Career Guidance for Schools” network, there are plenty activities that have been taken place.

The 1st International conference took place in Athens, on November 2006, with great success. The afflux of participants in great numbers confirmed that the core of career guidance appears a great interest for teachers, career counsellors and parents. Specialized experts from the field of education, counselling, psychology and labour market presented their own view concerning career guidance.

Three Newsletters of “Career Guidance for Schools” network was published on December 2006, including topics concerning the importance of career guidance, personal development, career guidance functions, services provided by career offices and the main activities of the project

On April of 2006, Ellinogermaniki Agogi, as the coordinator, organized a “Career Day”. Students had the opportunity to discuss with professionals from all fields of the labour market. Seventy professionals answered all the questions and presented their every day job life. The same time, experts from the field of counselling, pedagogy, psychology and labour market gave speeches to parents. At the end, students and their parents were excited having attended the event.

The Career Guide For Schools expanded the activities in different fields and developed a course session for distance career guidance via internet in rural areas in Greece.

The distance career guidance session is the outcome of a synergy of four European projects, Career Guide for schools network, which concerns the collection of exercises and activities of career guidance, implemented in students, the carcouit project, which refers to career counsellors training and Rural Wings and Hermes projects, which provide broadband internet in rural areas through Europe.

As a product, the teleconference tool provides broadband internet in rural areas, a chat room and the possibility of a videoconference and power point presentations.

As counsellors we have used this tool many times for distance career guidance lessons. We deem that is an excellent opportunity to help effectively students who live in those areas. We have noted that these students, have limited intensives in comparison with students living in town, limited information and limited perspectives. Students are planning their future, especially the professional future, according to the beaten track. They believe they do not have opportunities or alternative choices.

Via teleconference tool offered at the one hand, access to information, like educational system, departments of universities, jobs' descriptions etc...and at the other hand a full distance career guide session.

The conference tool and the career guidance process address to people who live in disadvantaged rural areas and especially to students from 12 to 19 years old, to teachers and counsellors who provide career guidance and of course to unemployed people who are trying to find a job.

At the conference presented a distance career guidance session in a small island in Greece, Leipsoi, with about 12 students.

Trying to evaluate the outcome of the session, we measured 5 parameters, before and after the session.

So, according to the questionnaires, before the session, just a 50% of students believed that will enjoy the distance session, but after that, almost everybody enjoyed that.

Before the lesson only 36% believed that will learn something more for self concept, but after the lesson, 96% of the students had learn an unknown aspect.

About 82% were expected to be frustrated but after the session only one kid felt frustration.

65% of students believed that will be motivated and after the session 94% found new motivations for boosting their self esteem

Finally, most of the students felt anxious before the lesson, as it was an unknown process for them but only one student was feeling anxious after the lesson.

According to the students' point of view, the distance session was a fruitful and revealing process.

Students' comments

“It was funny and motivated”

“At the beginning, we felt uncomfortable but...then we enjoyed it!!”

“It was a different approach...we were focused...we didn't get bored”

“Actually it was a lesson...but not a lesson exactly”

Year by year, students, parents, teachers and counselors realize more and more that career guidance is not a luxury but a necessity. A life plan seems like a cornerstone in the professional and personal life of individuals. Personal Development, information management, awareness, setting goals, decision making, decision implementation, career change, are some of the main steps of career counselling. Concluding in two words, we can say that the two “magic” words are *adoptability* and *flexibility* in new circumstances.

In the framework of Career Guide For Schools, was organised the 1st Career Counsellors' Interactive Training Seminar.

The in service teachers training “Career Counsellors Interactive Training Seminar” took place at Rhodes Island from the 3rd to 9th of July. At the seminar participated 15 career counsellors from Denmark, Romania, Finland, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Greece. Each one had a different educational and cultural background and it was really interesting the way of cooperation. Career Counsellors from different countries created a team, became colleagues for a week and friends for much more.

The main aim of the training seminar was to present the career counselling status in different countries and participants to exchange ideas, approaches and best practices for relevant issues. The main characteristic of the seminar was the interaction. In this seminar we wanted to give importance to actions and activities and not to theories. The most difficult part was to enter

interaction to the session of the personal development. It is always the hardest part as it demands personal disclosure to others. There were a lot of activities, games, scenarios and role playing games

At the programme were included presentations and activities for Personal Development, for self concept and decision making, and at last for Comenius and e –twinning projects.

Role playing: Counsellor -counselee

According to this exercise, a counsellor of the team plays the role of the counsellor and another one the role of the counselee. They both stay for some time apart from the others in order to talk. Each one has selected a problem to discuss with details as a counselee. Both participants have expressed their problem.

At the second step, the “couple” of the counsellor and counselee are playing their roles in front of the team. There is a table or desk, two chairs and the whole background of a counsellor’s office. The two players have to arrange the furniture in an appropriate way.

Then one of them will play the role of the counsellor and the other one the role of the counselee. The person who will play the role of the counselee will present as his/her problem, the “counsellors” problem. As a result, the person who plays the role of the counsellor will hear his/her problem and will face it as a third person.

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