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School counselling and professional guidance for pupils
Study regarding the need for counselling services and professional guidance for pupils

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Abstract: *An increase in the number of people needing education and initial professional formation and the increase of the qualification level of employed persons in the labour force is an objective that brings into discussion the need for an existence/improvement of counselling and professional guidance. For this reason, the purpose of this research, and evaluation of the need for counselling and school and professional guidance of pupils has been registered by the educational system from the Caras-Severin County. Specific objectives aim the evaluation of school counselling and professional guidance for gymnasium and high school pupils and the analysis of pupils' perceptions regarding counselling services. The results of this research are transposed into useful suggestions regarding the necessity for school and professional guidance services at the county, regional and national levels.*

Keywords: *school counselling, career counselling, professional guidance, education for a career.*

1. Theoretical framework

Studies, research and practice at the European level point to the deficit correlation of the educational system and the professional formation in Romania with the labour market dynamics. Education institutions concentrate on instruction, on the acquisition of information and less on competencies that will ensure an increase in the employment percentage of pupils in a dynamic and competitive labour market. For this reason, during the years 2014-2020, the general objective of financing European programs, in the educational domain, is represented by an increased number of persons attending an educational program or an initial professional training one and increased qualifications for persons employed in the labour market. The specific objectives aim at education promotion and the quality of initial and continuous formation, the promotion of entrepreneur culture and an increase in labour quality and productivity, the improvement of professional guidance and counselling, the promotion and development of partnerships between schools, universities, enterprises and other institutions to facilitate a transition from school to an active life.

Keeping in mind the need for pupils' socio-professional insertion and a correlation of training offers with permanent demands from the labour market, a need for the quality increase and an adaptation of counselling and

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professional guidance for pupils registered in our national educational system can result.¹

In this context counselling and professional guidance are services meant to complete knowledge and competencies, gained by pupils during speciality studies and assist them in the early planning of their career; and start an insertion with increased chances on the labour market. The training of those who should deal with counselling is defining how the counselling process will evolve. All counsellors need basic counselling techniques to relate to those in front of them and to help them understand their problems.²

However, it also happens that the counselling activity and school guidance are carried out by non-specialized staff. Professional counselling is perceived erroneously and limited, as strictly the process of providing the information necessary to exercise or choose a profession, a faculty, or a career path.³

Counselling work is multifaceted requiring a multitude of skills and abilities and a wide range of systematic actions. The complex responsibility of the school counsellor derives both from the role of optimization of the school-student relationship and from the support to be given to the student for his/her development as a social individual.⁴

2. The problem investigated and research methodology

During the scholastic year 2016-2017, by monitoring the options of graduates of the 8th grade from the Caras-Severin County, from a total of 2316 pupils, their guidance proved to be the following: theoretical education for 1225 pupils (the schools offer is adequate, but on the labour market there aren't many free positions), technological education - direct route - high school: 347 pupils (the schools offer is large for mechanical specialities, for the services domain the number of jobs is even lower than the demands of the labour market), technological education - progressive route: 468 pupils (a few options for the constructions domain, even if the labour market is developed in this sense). The same tendencies are observed for the following years regarding the school options of pupils from the 8th grade. For the scholastic year 2017-2018,

¹ G. C.Prodan, "Consilierea și asistența psihopedagogică." în Prodan G. C.& Nițulescu L. M., *Pedagogie și elemente de psihologie școlară. Ghid pentru susținerea examenului național de definitivare în învățământ*, Reșița, Editura Eftimie Murgu, 2016, p.207

² R. N. Jones, *Manual de consiliere*, București, Editura Trei, 2009, p.32

³ M. Crăciun, *Contribuția consilierii în carieră*, București, Editura Tritonic, 2017, p.41

⁴ V. Enea (coord.), *Intervenții psihologice în școală. Manualul psihologului școlar*. Iași, Editura Polirom, 2019, p.40

from a total of 2098 pupils that expressed their options, representing 70% of the total school population from the 8th grade, these have shown an increased interest in theoretical education (1047 pupils), followed by technological education (784 pupils) and by vocational education (267 pupils). For the scholastic year 2018-2019 results show the fact that from a total of 1982 pupils who expressed their opinions regarding their future school guidance, 958 pupils choose theoretical education, 243 pupils choose vocational education and 781 pupils choose technological education.

By analysing statistical data regarding a choice in school options of pupils of the 8th grade that choose to continue their studies according to the schooling offer and according to the tendencies of the labour market, we can observe that theoretical education has represented and still represents more than 50% of the schooling figure because pupils choose to attend a theoretical school that offers only a speciality in the detriment of technological or vocational education, which in the conditions of labour market integration, offers a qualification and competencies in one or more domains of activity.

Other factors discussed, regarding the influencing of school options of pupils from the 8th grade, are of a social and psychological nature, a situation which highlights the fact that family and school influence the most pupils' options; still pupils make choices at the suggestion of others or "advised" by parents or school and many choose according to their interests, motivation or aptitudes that every individual has.

The situations presented to underline the inadvertences between the pupils' choices, the school offers and the labour market. The cause of these malfunctions may be the weak quality of counselling and professional guidance services. For this reason, this research has been realized to evaluate the need for counselling and professional guidance of pupils registered in the Caras-Severin County educational system. Specific objectives have aimed at the evaluation of a need for counselling and professional guidance for pupils from the gymnasium and high school and the analysis of pupils' perception regarding counselling services.

The research sample is a non-probabilistic one, on quotas, keeping under control the independent variable of the education cycle to which pupils belong. From a total school population of 17.515 persons registered during the scholastic year 2016-2017 in the school institutions from the Caras-Severin County, 10.375 gymnasium pupils and 7.140 high school pupils, a representative sample of 16.160 persons has been formed: 9.518 gymnasium pupils, with ages between 10 and 15 years and 6.642 high school pupils with ages between 15 and 18 years. The sample was calculated for a trusted level of 92% and a sample error of +/- 3%.

The sociologic investigation as means of data collection has been used; the technique used was the questionnaire, and as a working instrument a list of questions having in mind the time used for this research, the precision degree

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required, the proportion, the structure and especially and the quality of the information desired.

Two questionnaires have been used, one for gymnasium pupils and one for high school pupils, each of them being formed of 9 items. Questionnaires measure the same variable and have been realized to identify the strong and weak points regarding current existent practices, but also coherent modalities for the improvement and development of counselling and school and professional guidance.

3. Results of research

By analysing items connected with a certain future projection of gymnasium pupils connected with the possibility to attend a high school, a college, leaving the country etc., and keeping in mind the respondents' ages which are between 11-15 years, 78,87% of pupils sustain that it is “very possible” and 14,16% “possible” that their future projection, on the short term, to attend a high school can be realized.

From the answers given by high school pupils, the possibility to attend a college is very possible; approximately 80% of the respondents affirm that it is “very possible” and “possible”. Since theoretical education represents 50% of the county's high school education (where finality is represented only by one specialization) the pupils' tendency to attend college is explained. Still, on many occasions, this choice doesn't represent a real motivation, according to the pupil's interests and the offer of the labour market. Over 80% of high school pupils sustain that it is “very possible” and “possible” to find a job according to their qualities.

Following these aspects, we can observe an accentuated optimism in pupils after graduation from high school, the probability to attend college or finding a job is increased.

Table 1. Future projection of gymnasium pupils. How probable is the following?

	Very possible	Possible	Little possibility No	I don't know
Gymnasium pupils You will attend High school?	78,87%	14,16%	3,75%	3,22%
High school pupils You will attend college?	50,66%	27,93%	12,01%	9,30%
High school pupils You will find a job according to your qualities?	35,29%	47,06%	8,19%	0,72%

From the data of this research, it results that approximately 80% of gymnasium pupils questioned “taught” of what school to attend in the future. A more relevant aspect is the fact that more than half of the students questioned from the 7th and the 8th grades, which are very close to the moment of

choosing a professional route, an aspect that leads to an increase of the awareness degree regarding the school to attend, what aptitude and disciplines are demanded the domain, profile and qualification/specialization they choose.

We have to underline the fact that 72% of high school pupils have taught of a profession they would like to acquire; there is projection regarding professions, a projection that through counselling and school and professional guidance must be corroborated with the pupil's attitudes, interests and training.

Table 2. Future projection. Have you taught until now?

	What school would you like to attend? Gymnasium pupils	What profession would you like to acquire? High school pupils
Yes	79,68%	72%
No	20,10%	27,91%
I don't know	0,22%	0,1%

Another dimension of this questionnaire is connected to sources/mediums from which information can be obtained and which can help the pupil choose his educational route. The most sustained effort regarding pupils' school guidance must be made by schools corroborated with families and other institutions and organizations that activate in this environment, of school and professional guidance. From the high school pupils' answers, we can observe the fact that for a percentage of 43,03% of pupils, the school can offer information and support them in choosing a school or occupation/profession, followed by families - 23,02%, and by information sources - 19,99% and formal sources - 9,59%.

Table 3. Sources/mediums from which information can be obtained. Where can you obtain information to help you in your school and professional guidance?

	Gymnasium pupils	High school pupils
School	57,39%	43,03%
Family	22,07%	23,02%
Informal sources	9,89%	19,99%
Formal sources	7,29%	9,59%
I don't know	2,98%	4,16%
I prefer not to answer	0,38%	0,21%

For gymnasium pupils the choice of a school/high school is the most important moment of what their school guidance means, this being the reason why we insisted on the specialized support they need. 91% of gymnasium pupils questioned say that there is a need for guidance and help from a specialized person, in choosing the future school to attend. The graphic representation for high school pupils shows that 92,68% of pupils are interested in being guided and helped by a specialized person in their professional choices. This aspect shows the fact that school and professional guidance must be a continuous process that is also sustained by authorized persons.

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Table 4. The need for specialized support. If you hadn't made a school choice, would you be interested in receiving guidance and help from a specialized person in this matter?

	Gymnasium pupils	High school pupils
Yes	91%	92,68%
No	8%	7,08%
I prefer not to answer	1%	0,24%

By insisting on the activities organized in a formal environment, through which pupils may benefit from counselling and guidance, we can observe the fact that 54% of gymnasium pupils consider the Counselling and Guidance class a source of sufficient information through which school support the pupil's school guidance. We also have to underline the fact that 54,37% of high school pupils "don't" consider Counselling and Guidance classes a sufficient source for their school and professional guidance. High school pupils need more information and practical activities to facilitate their school and professional guidance than gymnasium pupils.

Table 5. The need for counselling. Do you consider Counselling and Guidance classes (class master's classes) a source of sufficient information for school and professional guidance?

	Gymnasium pupils	High school pupils
Yes	54%	45,27%
No	45%	54,37%
I prefer not to answer	1%	0,36%

Gymnasium pupils need information regarding a high school (62,37%) regarding its facilities, accommodation, didactic staff, school activities and extra-curricular organized by every school, school schedule, number of places, school performances, followed by admission arithmetic mean, labour market, self-knowledge, job/profession world, school informative materials, experiences shared by high schools pupils, direct visits to high school etc.

From then high school pupils answer it results that they need: *information regarding jobs and professions* - 18,74%, *working conditions* - 16,34%, *information regarding colleges* -14,26%, *information regarding the labour market* - 8,21%, *information regarding financial aspects that certain jobs or professions* - 7,72%, *information regarding what they need to know about themselves* - 5,24% and final but not least *tendencies on a regional, national and European level regarding university specialities, jobs/professions*.

Table 6. Which information would you need for proper school guidance?

In school universe – Gymnasium pupils		In school universe – High school pupils	
High school information	62,37%	Jobs/professions world	18,74%
Other	13,34%	Working conditions	16,34%
Admission arithmetic mean	5,74%	Information regarding college	14,26%
Self-knowledge	2,83%	Other	16,95%

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Labour market	1,12%	Labour market	8,21%
Information is sufficient	1,2%	Money	7,72%
Educational finality	0,93%	Self-knowledge	5,24%
Jobs/professions world	0,73%	Economic agents	0,54%
No information	0,37%	County Agency for the Occupation of labour Forces	0,33%
I don't know	4,15%	No information	1,30%
I prefer not to answer	7,22%	I don't know	3,80%
		I prefer not to answer	6,58%

In school, pupils receive information regarding pupils' school and professional guidance in an organized frame. In conclusion, 53% of gymnasium pupils consider that the class master can offer this information, followed by the school counsellor - 15,60%. The class master is proved to be the landmark of every gymnasium pupil regarding information, support, and moral support, followed by the school counsellor recognized through specialized methods and techniques used in career counselling. We must underline the preferential position pupils have regarding the school director, the legal authority regarding "who" may "say what is best for the pupil".

School is the one that may offer information regarding the school and professional guidance for high school pupils: 34,90% of these say that their class master could offer information, followed by the school counsellor - 29,04%, other persons - 16,68%, other teachers - 12,89% and last but not least the school director - 5,59%. School responsibility, regarding the educational route and the professional one, results from the pupils' answers. At a secondary level, we find other persons - 16,68%, that represent family and another co-interested actor.

Table 7 – Who do you consider offering this information?

	Gymnasium pupils	High school pupils
Class master	53%	34,90%
School counsellor	15,60%	29,04%
Other teachers	6,35%	12,89%
Other persons	9,82%	16,68%
Director	13,75%	5,59%
I prefer not to answer	1,05%	0,08%

At the question "Do you consider useful a point for school and professional guidance in your school?", 92% of gymnasium pupils and 98% of high school pupils consider useful a point of school and professional guidance that has activity specificity career counselling. This fact proves the pupils' need to participate in counselling activities and the usefulness of this service.

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Table 8. Do you consider useful a point for school and professional guidance in your school?

	Gymnasium pupils	High school pupils
Yes	92,48%	98%
No	2,33%	2%
I prefer not to answer	5,19%	

When asked regarding the expectations regarding and Information and Counselling Points for gymnasium pupils they say that this could help: *take the best decision in choosing schools/professions* - 27,75%; *may receive supplementary information regarding schools, domains, profiles* - 20,75%; *to get help and know their interests, aptitudes* - 20,49%; *to talk to a qualified person* - 19,67% and last, but not least, *to know their own qualities* - 9,85%. The high school pupils' answers are close to *talking about the best decision in choosing a school/profession* - 2.958 pupils, *to be able to receive supplementary information regarding jobs or professions, domains and profiles* - 1.548 pupils, *to get help and know their aptitudes* - 1.423 pupils and last, but not least, *to talk to a qualified person* - 522 pupils.

Table 9. The expectations regarding and Information and Counselling Points. If there were a school and professional guidance point what would be your expectations?

	Gymnasium pupils	High school pupils
To be able to receive supplementary information regarding schools, domains, profiles/jobs	20,7 4%	21,68 %
To take the best decision in choosing the school to attend	27,7 5%	41,43 %
To help me know my interests/to get support in discovering my aptitudes	20,4 9%	19,93 %
To be able to talk to a qualified person regarding the school to attend	19,6 7%	7,31 %
To discover my personal aptitudes/interests	9,85 %	0,21 %
Other variants	0,23 %	0,46 %
I don't know	1,27 %	2,00 %

Conclusions

The complexity of the counselling process is obvious. Counselling is the process of guidance and learning, which is addressed to educational subjects (pupils, students) and their educational partners (parents, teachers, employers). The purpose of counselling is to empower them with the most effective

methods, techniques and procedures for managing and solving their educational problems.⁵

If according to the first references, school and professional guidance has been defined as “any organized means of approach for advice and guidance regarding professional choices”, F. Parsons (the founder of the first laboratory of vocational guidance) considers that there are three types of definitive demarches for actions of professional guidance:

a) The knowledge of demands and conditions of success in certain activity domains and implicitly the knowledge of demands characteristic for different professions,

b) The understanding of a person’s aptitudes, interests, dispositions and qualities, resources and limits,

c) The use of analysis procedures and inter-relating of the two data categories in order to interpret them and the formulation of conclusions that can be expressed through guidance advice in the person’s employment in different workplaces.⁶

Society is evolving, its demands are more diversified; labour, professions and occupations world is more dynamic, imposing a proper education and a continuous adapting. The ensemble of changes that can appear in the profession’s areas and in the human’s professional life determine the school and professional guidance to take into consideration the entire development of his professional life and to prepare the young for change and adaptability. Therefore, orientation is also a synonym to the young’s, the teenager’s education in elaborating personal projects in connection to his career, to understand multiple factors that participate in the determining of a successful career, to prepare him for adaptation and success. Thus, the use of more complex concepts is imposed – career guidance and career education. The definite note of career guidance is represented by its educational character. Career guidance needs a long educational process that follows the pupils’ personality development for a proper school and professional guidance and the choice of a future career. Career education refers to an ensemble of educational activities and interventions with the purpose of developing the pupils/students’ personalities, form abilities, necessary skills, and competencies for the management of their own careers.⁷

Counselling and guidance services harden the respect for the concept of education centred on pupils. In order to represent this concept, W. Pinar uses the word “currere”, referring to “an existential experience from the institutional structures”, “a strategy conceived in order to reveal experiences,

⁵ E. Dimitriu-Tiron, *Consiliere educațională*, Iași, Editura Institutul European, 2005, p.13

⁶ F. Parsons, *Choosing a vocation*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1909.

⁷ I. A. Dumitru, *Consiliere psihopedagogică*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2008, p.234.

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with to purpose to see more and clearer”⁸. Using this approach, teachers will reconceptualise the public area, which reduces pupils to simple consumers, and which will reconsider their educational goals.

Thus, we propose a few suggestions regarding school and professional guidance, suggestions resulting from the research presented:

- A reconsidering of the importance of activities and school and professional guidance is necessary, these mustn't be seen as compulsory in the educational curriculum, but as a support modality for pupils in schools.

- In order to ensure an efficient action of school and professional guidance the following must be realized: the study of learning results and of extra-curriculum activities, discussions with all education factors, discussions, debates with pupils, the application of sociologic, intelligence aptitudes, creativity tests, discussions with parents etc.

- School and professional guidance don't resume only to the activity realized during the class master's classes and the one realized by the school counsellor in his office of psycho-pedagogical assistance; it must be realized outside schools, through extra-curricular activities and in partnerships with the community. Activities of school and professional guidance represent a connection between school and family and implicitly the community. School and professional guidance must have a dynamic, open and poli-directional character, which will offer the pupil the possibility to choose a proper solution from more variants. The forms of extra-curricular activity proper for school guidance are: meetings with specialists of different professions, the consultation of bibliographies of some personalities, the following of specific TV and radio shows, visits and trips to certain socio-economic units, symposiums and round tables etc.

- An efficient promotion of services of school and professional guidance is necessary together with the pupils' and parents' motivating and attraction towards this type of support. The preparing of young people regarding the importance and the demands of school and professional guidance must ensure a concordance between their real possibilities and the social possibilities so that they could be aware of the best school and professional choice de support.

- It would naturally seem that actions of school guidance precede the ones of professional guidance. In reality, as we have observed from numerous research, certain specific elements of professional guidance, certain preferences and structured professional options may determine options for certain preparation profiles from specific educational structures.

⁸ W. Pinar, *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists*. Calif, McCutchan, Barkeley, 1975, p. 283

- School and professional guidance is a continuous activity, during the entire schooling activity, and not just in crucial moments, when the pupil is obliged to take decisions at the end of the school cycle. The realization of a school and professional guidance at a proper moment of the pupil's school evolution means that it is not too early when the necessary informational conditions are not insured, not too late when modelling becomes difficult. The optimum stage is based on sufficient baggage of general and specific knowledge, which determines the pupil to be aware of the most appropriate school and profession.

- In order to ensure scientific fundamentals, it is necessary that school and professional guidance be the result of research, in which all implicated subjects must participate, school counsellors, pupils, parents, psychologists, sociologists, teachers, ergonomists, economists etc.

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