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Why *career development counseling* for students?

Many will say that initially we need to: shape a personal profile, identify an occupation, prepare for a job, look for and get a job, practice the profession the young graduate is qualified for and then we can talk about “career development”. Traditionally, those who ask for career counseling services outside school considers that it is necessary to support career development when one wants to: be visible on the labor market, draw attention to personal CV, promote professional achievements, and take on other professional responsibilities. We hope that this theoretical analysis of the term “career development” highlights new opportunities for school counselors’ intervention and proposes new action models which will extend the career counselors’ scope of activity in an educational context and which will bring additional benefits to applicants for/beneficiaries of counseling. We believe that, besides the young people’ opting and preparing for a profession, it is advisable that they would undergo a program to facilitate personal development in order to concretely support the choice they made and to contribute to future professional performance.

Counseling on career development is a relatively new niche and it is a comprehensive approach for the preparation of young people for personal, professional and social success. It includes the usual activities that are undertaken for educational and vocational guidance, but these are included in a much broader range of action that has direct links with developments in social, economic, and labor market changes, which the phrase “personal and professional achievement” signifies. Currently, “success” in general is different for everyone, and comparison terms are relative. The society in which we live defines success around three elements: power, money, fame. Each individual’s success has a different meaning: getting a job to provide the financial resources needed for a decent, well-paid job, a job “ranked well in the social hierarchy”, the possibility of starting and supporting a family, job

promotions, acquisition of new knowledge and skills, etc.. Another common phenomenon is represented by the large number of young people who work in professional fields socially valued and hold “key positions” in a company, but who had average results in school. How did they manage to achieve success? is the question asked by those who, although having had good and very good results in school, are dissatisfied with their careers. Actually, the former have developed personal skills and competencies that contribute to effectively solving tasks related to their job that facilitates communication and networking with others and also contributes to job satisfaction etc.. There is yet another group of people for whom these issues of the “recognition and prestige” are not the most important in outlining career success. Everyone has their own vision on job satisfaction, on the professional field they work in or on their own professional development. Career success can be found in: the activities carried out in the workplace, the balance between family and work life, getting financial and professional satisfaction, and also time spent with the family; bonuses received for performance, the courage to start over after a professional failure, gaining new knowledge, etc..

Counseling on career development service is difficult to quantify in the immediately observable results after completion of a certain activity. It is based on the acquisition of information on the self and on occupational fields, which in turn will affect attitudinal and behavioral changes on the individual level (on the beneficiary respectively). The attitude towards work, profession, family, professional development, competitiveness and professional relationships, actually reflects future graduates’ professional behavior and often these issues are not found in their training. A normal question arises in this context: ‘Who is responsible for this?’. We believe it is the responsibility of several factors aimed at educating and training young people to achieve professional development, and one of these factors is represented by the school counselor.

This thesis proposes a theoretical and a research approach to the process of career counseling from a constructivist perspective. If constructivism is a philosophy of learning that provides insights on how people learn and those who guide this process of learning in counseling, constructivism has the same meaning since it teaches young people how to plan their lives in an organized manner so as to increase their chance of success in their personal, professional and social life.

Why constructivist counseling? This approach is an alternative that can be translated to a certain group of beneficiaries in order to support identification and development of a path forward in professional life which will provide them with the opportunity to achieve success. We underline the term “alternative” in order to draw attention to the fact that it is one of the working variants which can be employed by counselors in accordance with the needs and characteristics of each group of beneficiaries.

V. Peavy (2001) states that, when it comes to constructivist counseling, he prefers the terms “help-seeker” and “helper” to those of client and counselor. Some of the distinctive features include: constructivist counseling is a model of self-creation, it is a culture-centered approach and it is based on the concept of “cultural tool”; the counselors are encouraged to use an “everyday vocabulary” in order to communicate effectively with the clients, etc.. It is a co-constructivist approach in which the person who seeks help and that who offers help are considered experts. The person seeking help plays the expert role that can not be questioned in regards with his own life, while the expert advisor creates a framework for effective communication in a “building” which is used by both in order to continue their endeavor.

This thesis presents an adaptation of the constructivist approach in career counseling in the school space, having the students as beneficiaries and the school counselors as professionals. We hope that this model would be an alternative to the traditional model of counseling,

based on the idea of person-job fit. A comparative analysis of the investigation of the main actors in the counseling process is considered relevant since it is important that the person who provides certain services should also meet the beneficiaries' needs and expectations in order to prepare them with a general intervention scheme, which can be subsequently personalized.

Conducting research on students was based on several landmarks:

- Analysis of the students' perceptions of pupils according to the school profile because they already have some guidance, and this affects their openness to counseling services, to the frequency of their application and to the compatibility with a particular type of intervention conducted by the counselor;
- Analysis of the counseling need from three perspectives: the perception on the need for career counseling activities in general, the analysis of the counseling need from the perspective of the difficulties met in making a decision, the analysis of the counseling need from the perspective of self-image (favorable or less favorable).

The analysis of school counselors' activities is based on two directions:

- The choice of intervention strategies in relation to activities specific the school they work in (middle school, theoretical/technological/vocational high school);
- Professional experience (beginners or not).

The elements of analysis of the research focused on a number of ideas that can be found in the assumptions that were fully confirmed. We assumed that the constructivist model is a more appropriate tool from the perspective of the beneficiaries: for female students and for students studying in theoretical high schools, for students who are experiencing difficulties in the decision-making process, for students who do not have a positive image about themselves. From the perspective of professionals who use this model, we assumed that the work style of the

counselors who have gained experience in this field and who work with a specific group of beneficiaries, namely high school students, is preferable.

It is a model that provides freedom and is based on a joint effort to identify and build a career plan path. For students who do not have such a course, the model provides a favorable framework to explore different alternatives without having to make forced choices and for the experienced counselor it is favorable context in which they can assert their creativity in developing a strategy for personalized intervention.

The proposed guidelines are the innovative element in the approach of counseling specific to career development and their aim is the development of the students' social skills. Its purpose is to help students by facilitating the process of self-discovery, the analysis and interpretation of the information on the world of occupations and the most relevant aspect is a tool that makes new "acquisitions in the development of behaviors considered desirable in the professional life". The originality of the program meets the need for flexibility, adaptation to professional, effective communication and achieving performance by the beneficiaries of the act of counseling.

The thesis is structured in two parts: the first part deals with the issue of career counseling and the second part takes into account the constructivist perspective on career counseling. Besides the theoretical analysis, various figures and tables can be found which are intended to highlight specific items considered important in the research and which represent the original contribution to research, since they are mostly drawn from a personal perspective.

The following are brief content of the three chapters that constitute the first part of the thesis.

Chapter I provides an introduction to specific aspects of career counseling by clarifying the terminology used. It is a presentation of the work of school counseling as a career and its development in general, continuing with an analysis of educational counseling performed by teachers and of the counseling performed by school counselors from a psycho-pedagogical perspective.

The novelty of career counseling programs can *be a proactive approach to potential difficulties* of current students, as future graduates, that can occur after graduation. This proactive approach to career counseling programs aims to introduce activities which will develop “soft skills” (social skills) and the development of emotional intelligence.

Are young people trained to develop their soft skills more likely to engage and develop their careers? Yes, because people with such highly developed skills can better deal with change, have a better ability to adapt, relate much better in difficult and unforeseen situations and cooperate better with others.

A. Neculau (2001) states that “training aims at preparing for the profession”. By analogy, counseling “aims at preparing for the profession” by identifying the mental qualities that facilitate a desirable professional behavior.

This proactive approach to counseling in school represents a natural evolution of the concerns in the field of education, namely that of prediction, as Văideanu G. (1986) states: “the concern to anticipate increased in recent decades, it manifests itself in all areas”.

Chapter II is an intermediate step in presenting our topic, making a survey of the main theoretical approaches that are found in school practice. Firstly, conceptual delineations on paradigms, theories and models are proposed in order to facilitate the transition from research approach proposed in the second part of the thesis, as well as the working model for the school counselors.

According to the analyses conducted on a national scale, through the studies conducted by the Institute for Educational Sciences, the following models are promoted in the counseling and orientation activities:

- *The autonomous model*: considers counseling and orientation independent processes carried out by competent personnel in specialized clinics;
- *The dynamic model*: proposes a distinct area in the national curriculum, the activities being carried out by counselors and teachers, head teachers;

Chapter III initially introduces the forms of counseling: individual and group, and the last part of the chapter describes and analyzes the main working methods. These are the essential elements of counseling, accounting for the enforceable side. A specific element is highlighted by the active involvement of beneficiaries, so that they understand that a good part of the responsibility for getting what they have proposed their own. A specific aspect of this section of the chapter is to highlight the compatibility of specific methods of educational work and the work of career counseling.

We subsequently highlight specific aspects that constitute the content of the other chapters of second part of the thesis.

Chapter IV first reviews how constructivist theories have influenced the teaching-learning strategies and roles of students and teachers. We considered this necessary because it is difficult to separate counseling from the educational curriculum, since both represent a learning process and development of the individual.

The next subchapter presents the theory of socio-dynamic counseling proposed by the Canadian author V. Peavy, which constitutes the core of the thesis, on which the investigation is structured as well. Constructivist counseling is described as a method of life planning in which new knowledge is incorporated into the existing

structures of the individual. This approach has been described as the manner in which the client “build” themselves according to how they interpret social conditions and actions in relation to them. The author proposes a new constructivist vocabulary and a set of principles and methods (1998).

The next section of the chapter deals with the topic of the content of a counseling program. One of the models commonly used for the design of the training is the ADDIE model, based on five phases: analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation. If we consider that such advice involves the learning effort of the recipient, we can also adapt this model to designing counseling programs as well. Each stage of the model will generate information that will be used in the next step.

The last section of the chapter proposes a number of working methods and techniques specific to constructivist counseling. Schemes represent the manner in which worksheet technique was applied, how the worksheets were developed from my personal perspective and how can they be regarded as examples of tools used in the current work by counselors.

Chapter V is the investigation of students’ perceptions of school counselors and the counseling activities carried out in schools and high schools with students from final grades.

The purpose of research is to identify the perceptions of the two teammates in the counseling process activities taking place in constructivist manner.

The perception of a student is determined by the image he has on the activity itself: how to proceed, which is his role in this process, the contents of the proposed activity; finalities on short, medium or long term. We are interested to identify his *needs*. These needs will be reflected in his *expectations* which will be fulfilled during the counseling process. In order to meet them, the specialist will perform a role and will build practical skills. In parallel, it is important to identify the position of the person

organizing and carrying out this activity. Thus, the actions taken by the counselor will be found in the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries.

The study aims at examining, from multiple perspectives, the importance and frequency of specific activities designed in a:

- *Traditionalist manner*: based on the gathering information, evaluating the student's personality, personal profiling, making a connection between personal skills and job requirements;
- *Constructivist manner*: based on identifying within the student-counselor team of the way he wants to live his life, including in this analysis the personal, professional and social aspects.

This research step is an ascertaining one, the focus being on the description of the students' and school counselors' impressions in terms of the two dimensions in regard to their future career decision:

- *The importance of activities specific to constructivist career counseling;*
- *The difficulties in choosing a career.*

Hypotheses and research variables

Hypothesis 1: There are significant differences between boys and girls regarding their perceptions of career counseling in the sense that:

- girls will give greater importance than boys to constructivist counseling;
- girls will appreciate that constructivist activities are more frequent than traditional counseling activities as compared to boys;

Hypothesis 2: There are significant differences between students according to *the type of education* they are enrolled into in regards to the perception of career guidance in that:

- students from theoretical high schools will appreciate more Constructivist counseling than their peers in

vocational or technological schools who will give greater importance to traditional counseling.



Hypothesis 3: There is a significant correlation between the independent variable of *the difficulties in career decision making* and the dependent variable of *the perception on career counseling*.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant effect of the independent variable of *self-esteem* on the dependent variable of *the perception on career guidance*, meaning that students with low self-esteem award paramount importance to activities specific to constructivist counseling.

Hypothesis 5: There are significant correlations between students' perceptions on the career counseling process and those of the school counselors' in terms of the importance given to assessing the frequency of activities.

Hypothesis 6: There are significant differences between school counselors regarding the dependent variable of *the perception on career counseling* according to the independent variable the *teaching degree*, meaning that specialists with II or I degree will assess activities specific to constructivist counseling as more important than those belonging to traditional counseling as compared to their younger colleagues who have only tenure in teaching.

Hypothesis 7: There are significant differences between school counselors regarding the dependent variable *perception on career counseling* according to the independent variable of the *workplace*, meaning that professionals working with high school students will consider constructivist counseling as more important than the traditionalist counseling as compared to their colleagues working with her middle school students.

Correlational study variables:

1. Dependent variable (for the group of students and school counselors)

Perceptions on career counseling:

- perceptions of students /school counselors on the importance of constructivist / traditionalist counseling;
- perceptions of students/school counselors on the frequency of constructivist/traditionalist counseling on career.

2. Independent variables

For the group of students:

- the subjects' gender : female / male;
- type of education: general, vocational, technological
- difficulties in career decision making: lack of motivation, irrational beliefs, indecision, lack of information (general, individual), personal conflicts (internal, external), anxiety, pessimism, stress;
- self-esteem (high, medium, low).

For the group of school counselors:

- teaching degree (tenure in teaching, second teaching degree, first teaching degree);
- workplace (middle school, high school).

Instruments used in research

In this research we used the following tools:

- measuring perceptions on career counseling;
- measuring the difficulties in career decision making;
- perception scale on the efficiency of career counseling;
- Rosenberg Self-esteem Assessment Questionnaire;

Using the tools in the two groups of participants in the study was performed differently depending on the assumptions of the research. Thus the group of students completed all three questionnaires and group school counselors completed the questionnaire measuring perceptions on career counseling.

Measuring perceptions on career counseling

In order to identify trans-individual differences regarding perceptions on career counseling process we used the CCSES questionnaire (Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale) developed by O'Brien, Heim Bikos, Heppner, Flores.

The initial questionnaire contained 54 specific activities in career counseling in both the traditionalist and the constructivist manner. Respondents had to indicate on a Likert scale with six steps the extent to which these activities were carried out by them usually.

The questionnaire was translated and adapted to the Romanian population was pre-tested on a group of experts. These experts were asked to read the 54 items that are specific to traditional counseling and that describe best Constructivist counseling. Centralizing the responses caused the removal of a considerable number of items that were considered ambiguous by experts so that, finally, we kept our questionnaire for a total of 24 activities to describe the two types of career counseling.

Deviation from the initial questionnaire is represented by the introduction of a new dimension, the importance given by students or school counselors to such activities. The two groups of subjects will be required to assess these activities both in terms of importance and the frequency with which they are used in school activities. The internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha) of questionnaire is very good (0.712 for the questionnaire filled in by the counselors and 0.898 for the questionnaire filled in by the students), which allowed us to use the questionnaire validity and reliability.

Measuring the difficulties in career decision-making

We used a questionnaire to identify the difficulties of career decision making (CCDD-Coping with Career Decision-Making Difficulties) developed by Albion Majella J. (2000). The questionnaire was designed to

investigate gender differences in the difficulty of making a career decision facing young people.

The original questionnaire was translated and adapted to the Romanian population and includes the following subscales: lack of motivation, irrational beliefs, indecision, lack of information (general, individual) personal conflicts (internal, external), anxiety, pessimism, stress. Its good internal consistency (0.892) allowed the use of the questionnaire validly and reliably.

Rosenberg Self-esteem Assessment Questionnaire

To measure self-esteem we used the Self-esteem Scale designed by Rosenberg (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965). This scale was originally built with the intention to measure global feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance of the adolescent, and considered to be compared with other standard measuring scales.

The scale includes 10 items in the original form which are evaluated using a Likert scale with four levels (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) and has an internal consistency of 0.770.

For the present study we used a 6-speed scale reflecting the level of self-esteem: high, medium and low. Statistical analysis yielded a Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of 0.901, which allowed the use of the scale in its original form.

There are two categories of people in the research group:

- high school students (12th grade);
- school counselors.

Research was conducted in the NE region and the questionnaires had respondents in urban areas.

The group of students

The study involved students in upper secondary education respectively twelfth grade and were covered all three areas of high school education: theoretical, technological and

vocational. The group includes a number of 257 participants, including:

- 130 girls and 127 boys;
- 194 students from urban areas and 63 students from rural areas (which resulted in not taking into account this dimension, the group lacking balance);
- 84 students studying in theoretical high school, 82 students studying in technological high schools and 9282 students studying in vocational high schools.

The group of school counselors

It is formed by psychologists / pedagogues from psycho-pedagogical assistance offices and centers. On a regional level, the total number is 344. The study involved a total of 108 school counselors. The group of respondents consisted of:

- 7 male and 101 female subjects (prompting not taking into account this dimension, since it is not a balanced group);
- 41 specialists who have have tenure in teaching, 36 with second degree in teaching, 31 with first degree in teaching, 26 counselors who work only in middle school, 48 who work only in high school.

As statistical methods, in order to test hypotheses, the employed ones are: the Pearson correlation, the independent samples T-Tests and ANOVA One Way. Statistical data confirmed initial assumptions, the objective of the study being achieved.

Results Analysis in the group of students

✚ *The effect of the biological gender on the students' perception on the counseling process was demonstrated statistically:*

- for girls career counseling activities, both the traditional and constructivist, are more important than for boys;
- boys had higher scores than girls at the variable frequency of constructivist counseling activities.

✚ *The variable of high school route is another important determinant of the perception of career guidance:*

- all three groups (theoretical, technological or vocational) achieved *high scores on the variable of the importance of career guidance*;
- if we do trans-individual differences in preferences and needs, we can say that students attending technological high schools appreciate more traditionalist career counseling activities their peers from *theoretical high schools who believe that the constructivist counseling is more useful in career decision-making*;
- the same high scores were recorded by students from technological high schools and those from theoretical high schools on the variable the frequency traditionalist and constructivist counseling activities;
- students from vocational schools had lower scores, which might explain the low level of indecision on choosing educational route, since they are directed on a vocational career.

✚ *The effect of difficulties in career decision making on student perceptions regarding career counseling:*

- factors such as lack of motivation for a decision on the educational or professional path or irrational beliefs negatively correlated with the importance that students attach to career guidance in the sense that *the more they feel unmotivated and have more irrational beliefs about their professional future, the more useful they find career counseling activities*, be them traditionalist or constructivist;
- factors that impede career decision and indecision, the existence of personal conflicts, lack of general or individual information, anxiety, stress and pessimism positively correlate with perceptions on career guidance so that, *once experienced, these psychological determinants increases the interest in career counseling activities, especially those specific to constructivist activities*.

- ✚ The effect that the self-esteem has on the appreciation of the importance and usefulness of career guidance:
 - *students with low or medium self-esteem attach greater importance to activities specific to constructivist counseling than their peers who have a high self-esteem, but who consider them to be much more frequent.*

Comparative analysis of the results obtained in the group of students and school counselors

- in the same questionnaire, *the perceptions of the two groups of subjects were similar.*
- *both students and school counselors consider constructivist counseling as very important, the differences in their responses still being felt in the appreciation of the rate of achieving such activities, counselors obtaining higher scores.*

Analysis of the results obtained in the group school counselors

- ✚ The effect of the independent variable of the academic rank:
 - school counselors who are awarded only tenure in teaching expressed their interest in counseling with preference to the traditionalist one;
 - their colleagues who are awarded II or I degree in teaching consider more useful specific to constructivist counseling activities.

- ✚ The workplace and the role of the counselors from a constructivist counseling perspective:
 - those working with both high school and middle school students appreciate and frequently use the constructivist model;
 - those working only with high school students use both models;

- those working with middle school students prefer traditional counseling.

In conclusion, we can state the following:

✚ *It is necessary to optimize the counselors' competencies* so that to use other models than the conventional ones:

- this could take as a starting point, the “competencies model” presented by G. Pânișoară and IO Pânișoară (2007), which responds to changes at the organization level (needs, requirements), to the efficient implementation responsibilities of the job;
- some of the specialist skills deemed necessary for the best performance in the workplace include: searching for information, *conceptual flexibility*, focusing on results, focusing on self- and others- development, self-confidence, *proactive orientation* and so on;

✚ Competencies development can have several levels: novice, beginner-advanced, competent, professional, expert:

- most professional counselors' working style and approach is considered eclectic in their use of theories and techniques;
- an eclectic approach is effective if used knowingly, but it is problematic for a counselor who is not familiarized with applying this theories in practice (such as beginners);
- eclectic-integrative approaches are becoming more and more necessary and useful in achieving psycho-pedagogical counseling "as I. Al. Dumitru states(2008);
- *junior counselors prefer to use the traditional model* is supported by the idea that an eclectic model found in description levels: junior specialists have not had the opportunity to experiment with different models of intervention and it is recommended that the onset of activity preferably use one or two theories;

- *counselors who have already acquired experience* (those who received second and first degree in teaching) can use a specific *technical eclectic approach*, Cavanagh (1982) indicates that different techniques are used, without adhering to a particular theory, it is considered a recommended eclectic approach by which the counselor demonstrates knowledge and understanding of employed counseling theories;
- *preference* for using the constructivist model by counselors operating in *both secondary school and high school* is supported by the idea that their manner of work shows confident adjusting approach to client and not the other way around (it is more suitable for high school students) , thanks to the experience gained on the job they managed to get pertinent observations on strategies appropriate for a particular group of students in accordance with their age and psychological needs;
- we can say that a preference to use several models of intervention *places experienced counselors (second and first degree in teaching) in the eclectic model on the level of theoretical integration* which require the counselor to master at least two theories before trying to make specific combinations (Lazarus and Beutler, 1993);

✚ Developing research on constructivist career counseling led to the development of useful tools for measuring constructs related to this:

- *The scale of self-efficacy on career decision-making;*
- *The questionnaire of difficulties in career decision-making.*

We believe that these results support the understanding of the importance of carrying out educational and vocational guidance from a constructivist perspective by school counselors, as a support for career decision making among teenagers, specifically on the

factors that influence their decision or difficulties which they encounter when they need to choose a future profession.

Chapter VI represents a set of working recommendations for school counselors. This is the final result of the theoretical analysis of the steps taken and the investigation conducted (studies involving students and school counselors) is materialized in two tools, namely:

- the activities guide for the school counselor with theoretical elements, methodological suggestions and a description of all proposed activities;
- the student's workbook with activities corresponding to those in the counselor's guide.

The guide will contain a program of career counseling focused on *soft skills development*. In regards to the results of this type of counseling, this type of program meets the need expressed by students with low or average self-esteem, but not only. The benefits that students can obtain by following this counseling program come to their support by helping them take the right decision on their journey of their personal and professional life according to their personal traits which they identify and develop (key competencies required in order to achieve success). "Soft-skills" are applicable to most areas. Irrespective of the career path, the possession of such skills will facilitate interactions in the workplace, regardless of the type of relationship (collegiality, cooperation, subordination, coordination, etc.). People who have these skills can achieve better performance in work and are more likely to follow an ascendant career path. What sort of skills are "soft skills"? they are those interpersonal skills, diplomacy, tact, kindness, diligence, orientation and openness to others, as well as emotional balance. Why do we need this approach in career counseling? Are young people who developed soft skills more likely to engage and develop their careers? Yes, because people who have developed these skills can make changes easily, have better adaptation ability, relate much better in difficult and unexpected

situations and cooperate much better and work better with others.

Acquiring emotional intelligence skills is another purpose of career counseling programs and it refers to the individual responsiveness to different situations, its intelligence to capitalize on relationships with others and on others' personal emotions. Those who manage to their actions in the workplace based on emotions they recognize, are more likely to succeed in their careers, to cope in stressful and extreme situations. The development of these skills can be found in the content of career counseling programs designed in a constructivist manner.

Conclusions and personal contributions

This thesis is an analysis of the importance and of the frequency of both traditionalist and constructivist career counseling activities. We want to promote the idea that constructivist career counseling activities are designed to meet students' needs and expectations to achieve success professionally and socially. The role assumed by a specialist from this perspective and the skills he holds in order to design and implement the constructivist counseling model can be a proactive one, with beneficial results on everyone involved: student satisfaction, personal satisfaction on work efficiency. Statistical data confirmed initial assumptions, the study objective being achieved. Guidance and counseling activities in schools presuppose collaboration, and teamwork which involve all partners in the educational act whose mission is to create a "bridge" between students, parents and teachers in order to support effective cooperation between school, family and the community.

From the diversity of theories developed by various approaches, a selection was performed with the aim of helping design a general framework of the specifics of counseling in general and career counseling particularly. Regarding the theories and models of counseling intervention, we state that:

- traditional approaches to career decision-making tend to be rational and presuppose the individual choice, as well as the stability of the labor market;
- differentiated approaches based on “matching” continue to exert a significant influence on career counseling;
- theory and practice advanced, with an emphasis on the individual’s role as an active participant in career development;
- new theories have emerged, which take into account contextual aspects and offer different perspectives;
- changes in career counseling redefine the counselors as editors and co-authors of the process; instead of diagnosing, assessing and matching, they add meaning to career by identifying themes and tensions and they also help the participants acquire the necessary skills for a new stage in their life.

While traditional theories regard the counselor as an expert, modern theories regard the counselor as a facilitator who encourages the clients to take responsibility for and become aware of their own career development. The term “facilitator” will apply to situations where the guidance counselors envisage the educational end in the sense that, in order to create counseling strategies, more attention will be paid to discoveries deriving from fields such as pedagogy, instruction and cognitive sciences.

R. Walsh (“Philosophical Counseling Practice” in *Janus Head Winter*, Trivium Publications Amherst N.Y. 2005) describes philosophical counseling as an interaction between a professional philosopher and a client who wants to understand his attitude to life, to himself, as well as the consequences of his own actions. Based on this idea, counseling activities aim at assisting the client to develop a reflective attitude towards self-knowledge and to initiate the process of fulfilling his potential as a strategy to facilitate professional and social success.

Besides thorough training, the counselor should possess the skills to understand each person's particular situation, to demonstrate that he/she has the ability to reconfigure the counseling act each time according to the needs, characteristics and expectations of each client. Innovation, creativity, and the ability to re-think each situation represent an analytical approach, a commitment to identify opportunities for the client's career development.

From this perspective, the identification of the specialists' perception *on the role they must take on and the skills they must develop* reflects their focus on a certain type of action.

Recommendations for all actors involved in student career development activities organized in school:

For school counselors:

- We suggest the use of a tool designed in a pragmatic manner, materialized in a guideline centered on developing soft skills; this is developed in order to facilitate the simple and effective implementation of counseling activities: we have the "counselor's notebook" with specifications and explanations on the implementation of the proposed activities and the "student notebook" containing worksheets, as well as basic explanations on how to fill in the worksheets, as well as reflection exercises;
- Promote this manner of working among teachers as well;
- offering assistance to teachers for organization and identification of information which can facilitate the development of soft skills among students;

For teachers:

- Organizing school counseling activities which focus on career counseling, so that the students develop soft skills;
- Open-mindedness towards cooperation and implementation activities in common with other professionals from the educational arena (school counselors);

For policy makers:

- Deployment of measures regarding the school counselors' unitary mode of action in promoting other counseling models as well, along with the traditionalist one;
- Organizing training programs for school counselors in order to develop their abilities of designing and organizing counseling activities on "career development" tailored to fit the needs of future graduates in order to facilitate the integration and success.

Selected References