

CAREER COUNSELLING

COMPENDIUM OF METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Edited by
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Introduction

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This **Compendium of methods and techniques employed in career counselling** aims to be a synthetic presentation of the main instruments of the information, counselling and guidance practice.

Such a work (alongside others introducing the legal framework, the objectives and tasks of counsellors, the ethical code and the quality standards in the guidance practice, information and communication technology in career counselling, the characteristics of adult counselling, distance counselling, evaluating counsellors and counselling bodies, key competences of practitioners, counselling as education, etc.), is a milestone of professional maturity in the field.

It is to be expected that on review of this work, career counsellors should be able to:

- easily identify the methods and techniques that are most appropriate to the specificity of their work, most adequate to the client categories they work with and the problems that the latter face;
- choose – in awareness and by comparison – those counselling tools that have appropriated qualities for the identification of interests, aptitude systems, personality features, etc. of the clients involved, and on implementation and result interpretation, facilitate clients' decision making regarding their career, suggest alternative occupational pathways, support the creation of an individual career development plan, help understand the world of work and social and economic relations, enhance a successful start with the social and professional life;
- identify the evaluative qualities and the limits of professional counselling and guidance instruments;

- act professionally, ethically and qualitatively in the examinations, evaluations and interpretations required by the particular counselling situations.

European policies in the lifelong learning field reconfirm the essential importance of information, counselling and guidance services in the process of “facilitating the access to the education and continuing training offer” and of supporting the positive entering of social and professional life for young people and adults. In this sense it is necessary to create a culture of open, transparent, comprehensible dialogue resulting in a practical gain for both the clients and the employers. At the same time, these services must be provided insistently and persuasively so that any person should have the opportunity of learning and training throughout their lifetime and benefit from equal opportunities on the labour market (special attention should be given to groups threatened by social and job exclusion), stimulate social cohesion, encourage private initiative and assist the improvement of beneficiary’s lifestyle.

Counsellors who work in information, counselling and guidance institutions will make recourse to the information and communication technologies to facilitate the access to their services of as many clients as possible, will work in close cooperation with the local employers and the community, endeavouring that their services should be up to date, connected to clients’ needs, to their systems of qualifications and interests, and to the dynamics of the local, regional, national and European social and economic development.

While selecting the methods and techniques for this Compendium, we held in mind the following issues:

- the practical value of the method or technique for the field of counselling;
- solid, rational, logical theoretical base, grounded on rigorous and systematic empirical research;
- the existence of standards adapted to the social, cultural and economic specificity of the population or the possibility to easily adapt these instrument to the practice prevalent in our country;
- facile use and quick results, comprehensible for client and counsellor;
- the extent to which the method or technique are is widespread in career counselling in our country and internationally;
- the diversity of information sources, direct access to the reference material about the working method or technique.

At the same time, the selection process is concerned with aspects such as:

- the consensus or majority vote of the authors team and their close collaborators;
- the result of polls among counselling practitioners regarding the instruments they employ in practice or have requested to use.

In the choice of instruments, the following practical considerations are of some importance:

- adapting the instrument to the category of clients requesting counselling services and to the specificity of their problems;
- mastering in detail all the technical and methodological aspects required for the administration of the instruments, scoring and interpretation of results;
- being acquainted with the social, cultural and economic environment of the clients, as well as with other characteristics pertaining to their gender, education, residence;
- knowing the context in which the instrument intended for use was developed before deciding for its applicability;
- the comprehensibility of the general structure, procedural friendliness, statistical support, availability of standards and scoring scales;
- the extent to which the instrument offers the information needed by the clients in their career development.

The main questions that counsellors should ask when deciding upon the purchase, adaptation and use of tests are the following:

- To what purpose were the tests developed? What do they claim to measure?
- What target groups are they recommended for?
- What types of items / tasks does the test employ for evaluation?
- Does the test come with an administration and scoring manual?
- Does the test include standards and scoring scales for assessing the results?
- Is the test easy to use and the result interpretation comprehensible and transparent for the beneficiaries?
- Are there data regarding the test's reliability and validity?
- Are there copyright provisions? What are the costs?
- Who are the authors of the test?

Another category of problems that such a work may encounter is related to the methodological systematisation, categorization, taxonomy of models and techniques used in the practice of career counselling. It is known that extremely diverse objectives, criteria, indicators might be applied to the process.

In their daily activity the counsellors develop their own working style based on their preferences regarding the methods and techniques; on the other hand they must use certain methods and techniques adequate to the categories of clients and to the categories of problems raised.

In general, the sources of information / purchase of the instruments / questionnaires / tests, etc. used in career counselling are:

- specialized publishing houses commercialising psychological investigation tools;
- publications (journals, books, other sources on the Internet);
- copies from the originals in universities (used experimentally for research);
- direct purchase from the source of the free use rights (through professional organizations, libraries, peer counsellors);
- purchasing the reference instruments and the rights of translation, adaptation, re-sampling and use (by institutes and universities) with their own funding or through various projects and programmes;
- elaborating original instruments at the national level as a result of research activity carried in institutes and universities.

It must be said that it is forbidden to use psychological instruments protected by the copyright act without the permission of the authors or publishers. Access to these instruments is granted on the condition of purchasing the rights to adapt and use in full compliance with the laws, orders and provisions of the Regulations of professional associations in the field.

Besides the legislation, there are ethical principles that regulate the professional use of methods and techniques specific to career counselling and the counsellors behaviour in relation to them.

The present Compendium is a methodological handbook and also a professional statement of coherence, synergy and continuity in the work of career counselling, a scientific and systematic approach to the field and a way of supporting high quality service of information, counselling and guidance.

We hope this Compendium to be a useful instrument both for the undergraduates preparing to become counsellors, professors teaching this course and counselling practitioners in the fields of education, employment, youth work, law enforcement, healthcare, military and others and who are known as careers advisors, school counsellors, educational and vocational guidance counsellors, employment officers, etc.

Methodological Aspects

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Career counselling is a global approach to individuals under all aspects of their personal, professional and social life; it consists in providing information, counselling and guidance services with a view to supporting each and every person – in any stage of their life – in the development of their own career through decision-making as regards to education, work, and community life.

The domain of career counselling has known success and recoil of using various assessment methods and techniques (in the beginning mostly psychological tests, currently mostly questionnaires and inventories of interests, preferences, aptitudes, attitudes and values). In the dawn of educational and vocational guidance in Romania we can identify a psychometric phase, followed by an educational phase, and by the contemporary phase related to cognitive information management and processing, having the holistic career approach ethics and quality at its core.

In career counselling we identify helpful methods among tests, questionnaires or inventories concerning:

- aptitudes (intellectual, verbal, numerical, reasoning, reaction speed, special talents, etc.);
- personality;
- interests and special needs;
- values and attitudes;
- assessment of academic acquisitions (learning skills and methods);
- interpersonal relations;

- self-image;
- decision-making;
- career development (training for decision-making);
- special categories of population.

Tests are a means to objective and systematic measurement / assessment of certain behavioural elements (in either areas: aptitudes, personality, attitudes, knowledge) of individuals, based on their answers to certain work-related tasks. These fixed sequences of personal characteristics investigated are considered relevant to defining and identifying the respective aspects in human subjects.

Standardized inventories are also means of measuring behavioural segments, in which the subject's answers are not judged as right or wrong, but compared against those of other individuals taken to be a group norm (Brown and Brooks, 1991).

In practice, it has been shown that in most cases counsellors use inventories of interests and skills rather than psychological performance and personality tests. In fact, the balance between one type of instruments and the other stems from the role assumed by counsellors: whether it is centred in supporting clients with their career development and decision-making, or in interpreting information for what is considered to be their clients' best interest. As it can be noticed, the ends are the same, but the means different in each of the two situations described.

Here are what psychological inventories and tests can identify with respect to career counselling:

- areas of interest / preference in the sphere of occupations;
- skills, abilities, aptitudes, as well as levels of performance required in various occupational areas;
- aspects of personality compatible with certain occupational fields;
- possible causes of dissatisfaction or lack of progress in the case of people on the job;
- personal blockage and stereotypes in decision-making in the clients' occupational field.

Interposing tests and inventories between counsellor and client is not devoid of criticism. The most pertinent criticisms refer to the following:

- counselling does not necessarily involve testing;
- test results distort the relationship between counsellor and client;
- tests increase client dependency on external decision-making or self-evaluation, self-management, self governed social and professional insertion;

- tests are not infallible and are often “responsible” for cultural and gender labelling;
- some results of psychological tests and inventories have a negative impact on certain categories of clients, in a manner that can discourage, debilitate their self-image instead of improving it, etc.

Nevertheless, many of the observations above target the inappropriate use of test and inventory results and not the instruments themselves.

It is therefore up to the counsellor to choose the appropriate tests and inventories for each particular client according to the type of problems raised, the way the instruments are used and especially to the interpretation of the results, as well as to the ethical and professional standards of practice.

After all, a counsellor employs certain tests and inventories to help clients get to know themselves, self-assess their personal resources, enable them for decision and planning their own careers. In other words, the assessment instruments can help clients with:

- awareness of personal aptitudes, ability, skills or knowledge;
- choosing education and training pathways in accordance with their projects and results regarding their career in given life contexts;
- identifying occupational alternatives complementary to their structure of interests, aptitudes and dominant personality traits;
- drawing up a positive and realistic self-image;
- identifying the causes, the nature and the amplitude of barriers in their occupational area;
- preparing for decision-making and autonomous career planning development;
- compensating the gap in information, incomplete or erroneous information and diminishing the stereotypes regarding the world of work;
- identifying possible sources of professional dissatisfaction, social misfit or difficulty in carrying relationships and role performing.

Counsellors employ psychological tests and inventories mainly in two cases:

- they wish to save time when busy with many clients;
- they attempt to compensate the lack of information in the case of new clients.

A counsellor can obtain sufficient information about clients on a first meeting through the interview that usually takes place in such circumstances. This is true in case of people familiar with counselling; in these situations, evaluation by psychological tests and inventories is uneconomic in terms of time, relevant information gained, and costs.

Other clients directly and explicitly request assessment with psychological tests and might not have an accurate self-image or ongoing projects for career development. Such

people can express unrealistic expectations regarding the testing, as well as regarding the counsellors themselves.

In special cases, counsellors make use of tests or inventories in order to “break the ice” in the communication with certain clients or in following meetings as supplementary arguments to help them come to a decision: choose an education way or select an occupation.

Client priorities are the benchmark concerning whether to employ or not certain tests and/or inventories.

Even more important than the administration of the psychological tests or inventories is the interpretation of the outcomes they produce.

Here are broadly the steps that a counsellor must make sure to have taken:

- choosing the most appropriate instrument which can have maximum impact on solving the problems of the client;
- making sure the subjects understand the purpose of the test and/or inventory about to be applied, the tasks that need completion, the filling out procedure, the reasonable expectations to have in relation to the testing;
- checking that subjects offer all required data;
- taking notes about the behaviour of the clients while sitting in the test;
- rigorously checking the answers, consulting with the answer page, encoding, adding up results (for subtests);
- accurately reporting performance to standards;
- reviewing the data obtained and preparing the client for the interpretations of the results (during the same appointment but preferably in the next session). Here are a few questions for the client that can be asked by the counsellor before the interpretation of the results: *What do you think about the test? What do you think was your performance? What did you think of the testing conditions? What questions stood out? Can I clarify anything for you?*;
- obtaining the necessary information in order to understand the performance with respect to the client’s real life (level of education, social and cultural environment, gender status, personality traits, etc.; the same score does not automatically mean the same irrespective of the client);
- integrating all the information on the client (education, family, personal experience, etc.) in a dynamic, realistic interpretation, related to the client’s real life, which should make sense and have the a proactive value;
- at the same time, during the interpretation itself, the counsellor must:
 - actively involve the client in attributing meaning to the results (e.g. *“With mechanic interests you scored very high and with artistic*

interests below average. Why do you think this is the case?”),

- avoid a highly specialized language in explanations, technical terms that could be unknown or wrongly / vaguely perceived by the client,
- have an attitude of **well-meaning neutrality** and not “beautify” the results at certain subtests: some subjects may be astonished by the capacity of the test and of the counsellor to reveal very personal things in their life or may be offended by certain failures (*“The difficulty and the discomfort of interpreting low performance or negative results is the problem of the counsellor and not of the client”* (Tinsley and Bradley, 1986),
- be aware of the client’s attitude towards the “ability” of the psychological tests to “solve” personal issues, support them so that the clients’ expectations are realistic (for instance the client may have an exaggerated faith in the test to provide miraculous results or solutions; the counsellor may encounter scepticism or negativity due to difficulties in introspection or as a defence mechanism, etc.).

Practice has proved that in career counselling, guidance and information the clients request and accept a comprehensive approach to their problems and do not focus on choosing an occupation. This makes counsellors admit the fact – which is natural, in fact – that people consider the different roles they perform simultaneously and/or alternatively throughout their lives to make up a continuum they get involved in completely, with their entire being and all aspects of their personality. For these reasons, the counsellors must understand the intra-personal interactions triggered by performing various roles by an individual in a concrete life situation.

Technical, basic information accompanying any quality psychological test refers to:

- **reliability**: lack of measurement errors in psychological evaluation, assessed by the internal consistency of the test and stability in time of the scores obtained when the test is re-applied; the *reliability coefficient* (which in most quality tests ranges between 0.80-0.90) is estimated through:
 - *internal consistency* of the instrument, resulting from a *statistical calculus* of correlation and assessed to be high if all tasks / items of the test prove to measure the same psychological variable; the check can also be performed by *applying test halves* and calculating the correlation coefficients of the scores of the two halves of the test,
 - *stability in time* of the performance obtained by the client, which implies *testing-retesting* after a certain interval (the two halves must contain the same number of items and a similar degree of difficulty, and the selection can be performed by selecting the items numbered

with odd numbers for instance; a stability coefficient of the scores is considered to be better the closer it is to 1;

- **validity**: it is the most important quality of a test and refers to adapting the contents of the test to the problem under investigation (in other words, is the affirmative answer to the following question: does the test truly measure what it intends / claims to be measuring?). This quality of a test is indispensable because in many situations the direct measurement of one's psychological characteristics is not possible (e.g. interests, attitudes, personality traits, etc.).

There are three main categories of validity tests:

- *content validity*: refers to the proportion of items in the test that are significant / relevant to cover the objective of the psychological measurement (the most frequent cases are the scholar tests),
- *criterion validity* refers to providing a proof / prediction with respect to the existence of a relationship between the test results and a certain type of behaviour, taken as a criterion (e.g.: if we are to evaluate work performance, we should include in the respective test those items that will make sure that we are evaluating precisely the aspects that define the respective criterion); two types of criterion validity are identified in that case: *predictive* and *concurrent*, function of the temporal relationship between the test results and the confirmation in reality of the measurements made,
- *construct validity* refers to the degree in which a test through its items measures a certain psychological trait which we wish to evaluate (the construct / concept reflects in this case the operationalisation of a theoretical psychological framework based on which the test is developed).

A synthetic table regarding the *types of validity*, their purpose and the procedures to determine the respective coefficients (Bezanson, Monsebraaten and Pigeon, 1990) is presented below:

Validity type		Purpose	Procedure
contents		to establish whether the scores offer a correct assessment of performance in a set of tasks	logical comparison of items to be evaluated
criterion	predictive	to establish the potential of the scores to anticipate future performance	applying the inventory, making use of the results to anticipate future performance, retesting and comparing predictions with new results

construct	concurrent	to establish whether scores allow an estimate of current performance	applying inventory and obtaining direct measure of targeted performance, making a comparison
	convergent	to verify if scales (of the tests, inventories) are linked to other similar ones with the same theoretical fundament	assessing the degree in which the scales are correlated with similar ones regarding the theoretical approach
	discriminative	to verify if scales (of the tests, inventories) are different from similar ones in different theories	assessing the degree in which the scales are correlated with similar ones from different theoretical approach

- **objectivity:** refers to that quality of the test that allows for similar results with different operators (tests relatively “immune” to the subjectivity of the score-marker are multiple-choice questions, such as true / false or pre-formulated answers);
- **the practical value** of the test refers to its appropriateness in everyday psychological evaluation: *economical* (re-usable materials: grid format, the test itself, apparatus, textbooks, answer sheets), *reduced duration of application*, easy to understand by subjects of the *filling-out instructions*, *quick scoring and straightforward interpretation pathways*).

In general, the authors of professional psychological assessment instruments offer along with the test all the data regarding the characteristics of the population on which the scoring standards were elaborated (gender, age, education, etc.), as well as statistical information and commentaries considered to be relevant with respect to the main quality features of the tests (reliability, validity, etc.).

As regards the people whom are subjected to psychological tests, inventories, questionnaires, etc., the counsellor performs the assessment in order to find out what they *can do* (due to their innate personal qualities or prior learning) and what they *would like to do* (interests, motivation, attitudes). The relationship between these aspects of the individual’s personality is a different matter: both components are, reciprocally, the necessary but insufficient conditions to ensure success in the workplace. We should mention here that when we speak of work in the broad sense we mean activities that can be mostly manual / physical or intellectual, carried out in order to make an income or other kinds of material, moral or financial compensation for the effort made or the time consumed. Among the categories of activities targeted and that qualify as work are: in state or private institutions and enterprises, at home, voluntary / charitable, learning and training activities, etc.

Certainly, the assessment of clients has a supplementary justification if the career counselling involves or requires it, according to the definition accepted by the majority of practitioners or theoreticians in the field.

“Career counselling is the process of attaining the maximum compatibility between the resources, requirements, aspirations or interests of an individual and the real offer in the field of education, training and social and vocational integration. Career counselling is a social service initiating a holistic, continual, flexible approach of individuals, throughout all the phases of their lives (formal education, employment, social integration, community involvement, continuing professional development, changing jobs, family status, re-qualifications, retirement, etc.) and under all the significant aspects of life and the roles taken on in school, profession, social and community life, family, leisure, etc. which is represented by information, counselling and guidance provided by authorized counsellors.” (Jigău, 2003).

We implicitly find in this extended definition of career counselling the idea of individual characteristics and work environments, the purpose of the information, counselling and guidance, counselling throughout one’s lifetime, as well as elements of the processes related to decision-making and planning career development.

Consequently, career counselling is a basic component of information, counselling and guidance services meant to support the social and professional integration of all age groups through lifelong learning and counselling.

For a long time, in the psychological assessment and examination with a view to career counselling (or educational and vocational guidance, in a more restrictive sense), aptitudes and personality traits were considered decisive.

Recent research has drawn attention to the fact that people exhibit complex occupational behaviours and are not a *puzzle* of independent characteristics, that they have unique life experiences, a hereditary background which cannot be replicated, sets of values, aspirations and attitudes in various contexts of their existence, that in their social and professional life they play different roles simultaneously or successively, other than those strictly related to their occupation, etc. Thus, psychological evaluation and examination will have to take into account the influence of other aspects, such as family, education, community, pastimes, hobbies, public functions voluntary taken or other roles played throughout one’s lifetime.

Assessment with a view to career counselling is particularized function of clients, who may be:

- children, students (from public or private schools, general or special education);
- adults:
 - employed in state or private companies or self-employed,
 - who wish to change jobs,

- who wish to change professions,
- who are enrolled in various training programmes,
- unemployed,
- immigrants, expatriates, etc.

Herr and Cramer (1996) classify examinations performed with a view to career counselling according to their purpose:

- predictive;
- discriminative;
- monitoring;
- evaluative as such.

Each of these kinds of examination is important and useful – in various situations – to support an individual in the process of self-knowledge, information, counselling and guidance:

- **predictive** examination will anticipate clients' potential regarding education, training and work, occupational mobility, on the scale of social positions or possible performances that could be reached. The following questions will be answered: *What can I achieve in the future? Is it worth investing in this? What activity will bring me success?*
- **discriminative** examination will aspire to consider qualities and performance in relation to certain interests, values and preferences for certain occupations and the compatibility with certain work environments. The following questions will be answered: *Am I suited to this occupation? Is this work environment suitable for me? Can I adapt and will I be efficient in this occupation?*

Both kinds of examination presented above offer answers to clients about the “content of choice” (“*choosing an occupation means choosing a way of implementing one's self-image*” Super, 1997).

- examination performed for **monitoring** offers information about the training market in order to make choices regarding occupations, about the maturity level required to start a personal project of career development, about the decision quality and opinions on work; here we speak of cognitive and moral-attitudinal variables existing or under stabilization. These examinations offer clients models so that they can decide on an occupation, “teach” them to be independent and choose between equal alternatives, in other words it is a question of “turning occupational choice into a process”;
- examination for **evaluation** interventions concerns the measurement of the level attained in realization of the career counselling and guidance objectives.

Results of various programmes are taken into consideration, as well as the effects of strategies and projects related to information, counselling and guidance, at the level of individuals, institutions and society.

The results of quality evaluation performed with a view to career counselling should confirm (at least broadly speaking) the “hunches” or opinions of the clients regarding their self-image, interests and aptitudes or other aspects targeted by the tests or questionnaires employed; any evident conflict in this sense should call the counsellors’ attention to the methodology employed or render them sceptical regarding this instrument, its application or interpretation.

Research focusing on values that are important to individuals and related to the work process (Katz, 1993) has led to identifying ten basic values that can be taken as benchmarks in decision-making and clarification of personal options in concrete situations. The author has compiled an exercise – in electronic format – in order to clarify the personal values of clients related to the world of work, known as SIGI PLUS (*System for Interactive Guidance Information*).

The 10 basic values making up SIGI PLUS are:

SIGI PLUS Values	Explanations
1. High income	Certain salary – as result of work – is necessary for each individual. A salary considered to be good can differ according to the individual concerned.
2. Prestige	Certain occupations offer to those who practice them a certain prestige. This phenomenon varies function of the economic and cultural context or the social recognition of the profession, etc.
3. Independence	Variable degree of independence in work tasks, decisions, etc. function of the occupation.
4. Helping others	Some enjoy dedicating their work to helping others (health care, education, social work, etc.).
5. Security	Security / stability of the workplace and salary (even if the latter is lower in Romania than elsewhere).
6. Diversity	Variety of work tasks function of the occupation; some dislike monotonous, repetitive tasks or tasks that do not involve thinking and planning.
7. Leadership	Some find it important to have an opportunity to lead, make decisions and take on responsibility.
8. Do the desired work	Some find it important to match their job to their interests (technology, art, IT, etc.), and other values mentioned above are secondary.
9. Leisure	Some find it important to have sufficient leisure opportunities and so they can accept uninteresting work, part-time jobs, with long and frequent vacations, flexible hours, etc. (Leisure activities classification: games, sports, outdoor activities, collecting, building, art and music, education, entertainment and culture, voluntary work within organizations, etc.).

10. Immediate employment	Some consider it important to choose an occupation that will lead to immediate employment, rather than seek for longer and perhaps fail, or get involved in further training and study to increase their own chances.
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People who have clear answers to the problems listed above will find it easier to make decisions regarding their career; this means free choice of personal values and not under external pressure, knowledge of the implication of their choices (leading to renouncement or advantages) acting in order to put them into practice.

Kapes, Mastie and Whitfield (1994) state that the results of an examination carried out with a view to career counselling can be used for guidance, to discover and certify competence, to support decisions and career development. At the same time, with this approach, the objective of career counselling is no longer finding an occupation that should best fit the client, but occupational families or even large occupational fields, since the person is believed apt to learn continually, to adapt to new work situations and to be involved in the development of their own competence. In this logic, we need to include a new stage of counselling: that of “planning the development of a career and its change” (NAEP, 1971). At present, most counsellors reject the idea that for a certain client, “there is only one suitable occupation” and opt to counsel their clients to make “broader decisions”, to stay open to several work opportunities or “alternative careers”, invite them to self-knowledge and personal information quest first and then guide them towards “flexible decisions”.

The justified “transfer” of the career decision from the counsellor to the client is the most rational professional behaviour of the counsellor.

In relation to this process, Kapes, Mastie and Whitfield (1994) set a few “career development principles”:

- *career development is a lifelong process, a succession of choices*; these changes concerning choices and the focus of professional interest are generated by the changes that appear both at the personal level (due to education, training, experience, access to new information), as well as work environment (economic, social, technological progress);
- *decision-making and planning the development of one’s career is a process that can be learned and applied throughout one’s lifetime*; for this it is necessary to complete stages such as: problem identification, gathering information, formulating alternatives, evaluating options and developing action plans;
- *in career choice multiple factors are involved*: interests, aptitudes, knowledge acquired in the school and beyond, skills, needs, values, self-image, other subjective factors;

- *previous experience influences current needs and interests*: recognizing and putting to use previous valuable acquisitions is important for career development;
- *social context influences opinions of the individuals*: the expectations of colleagues, teachers, parents, relatives, other noteworthy persons or societal perception of a profession can have a significant impact on formulating decisions related to one's career;
- *the myth of "the unique suitable profession" is harmful and inexact*: any person can be successful and satisfied in more than one occupation or field;
- *positive and realistic self-image, confidence are paramount in formulating options and pursuing career development*;
- *chance can be "prepared" not just awaited for*; being proactive increases the likelihood of a successful career.

Many approaches applied by counsellors use such principles as benchmarks and the lifelong counselling is viewed as a whole: beneficiaries of the information, counselling and guidance services must be open to new learning experience, be flexible professionally, adaptable and willing to approach new occupational perspectives. On the other hand, counsellors need to encourage clients to take on responsibility, incorporate the new competence acquired through practice, be ever more independent and apt to learn.

As regards the new job market (Peterson, Sampson, Reardon, 1991), counsellors must take into account the fact that it will be characterized by: a larger number of older working people, more immigrants, more varied ethnic and racial groups, more disabled people, more working women, etc. On the other hand, the organizational culture of work will likely be characterized by: the relative diminution of the distance between those in charge and those carrying out instructions, less uncertainty regarding the back end of the work performed, the increased importance of individual work to the disadvantage of group work, etc. and all this in a global perspective marked by the massive invasion of new technology in every aspect of jobs, an increased importance of communication, lifelong training, rational energy consumption and scarcity of resources, etc.

Under such circumstances, clients can be offered the following work options:

- creating personal jobs;
- full-time or part-time jobs;
- continuous work (in shifts);
- flexible hours;
- working overtime;
- holding several jobs;

- working for different companies (out of which one night-time job);
- a position divided alternatively between two employees;
- employment for only a few days a week (for retired and unemployed over 50 years old);
- working from home;
- temporary jobs in busy seasons;
- seasonal jobs;
- occupying two positions within the same institution, etc.

The process of decision-making is strongly dependent on information, namely providing information, rendering it adequate, managing it, accuracy, quality, cognitive processing by users, etc. The entire process (which is not wholly rational and foreign to intuition or inspiration) requires understanding / acquisition / interiorisation of information and its processing, temporal sequences of decision and indecision or of independence and dependence, all leading in the end to the creation of a stable self-image (preferably positive and realistic) and of decisions which will be acted upon voluntarily, independently, persistently and with strong motivational support.

Some of the choices made by people are due to significant events occurring in their lives, and in other situations decisions regarding career development are made according to the way they interpret or understand the information received from various sources, all related to the way they see themselves in real life contexts, in other words, they “create” their future by what they believe and do.

As styles of decision-making we identify two situations with opposites: spontaneous – systematic (according to the reactions to the information about the problem) and internal – external (according to the analysis of the information useful in any decision); it may be that only the respective person is involved in this process, and/or friends / family, as well as and/or the society through various means of “pressure” for social and professional insertion.

Recent research underlines that in identifying a job opportunity over 50% of the people had the help of their friends, acquaintances, etc., and about a third (especially young people) found a job through computerized data sources specialized in the field. The increase of the Internet use over the past years to seek and find employment is significant.

In certain situations which seem to be increasingly frequent, and as if in spite of the most rational models of decision making in terms of educational and professional options, individuals follow another course. Their decision is justified by the priority and urgency of finding a solution to a personal case:

- “today, tomorrow or one of these days I absolutely must enrol in a school programme”;

- “I’ve been looking for a job for far too long to stop and think if this one is suitable for me or not”.

Once this first psychological tension (internal and/or external) in the sphere of **conjunctural decision** is relieved, the following instances of justification may arise (possibly as reparation):

- “If I find I hate this school I will get a transfer, but I had to enrol somewhere as soon as possible at the beginning of the school year.”
- “If I really can’t perform the tasks assigned so as not to affect my salary or jeopardize my status I’ll look for another job (once you have one job, it’s easier to find another) or I’ll get some training in the meantime.”

In these cases, the rational models of decision-making offer either a post-factum explanation, either express an educational or training intention.

More consistent hopes of “**conjunctural / impulsive decisions**” can (apparently) be found in the explanatory potential of cognitive models which seem to draw nearer to the reality of the concrete decision-making process.

The basic elements of a coherent career counselling system implies the existence of a well-trained staff, institutional information, counselling and guidance networks, an ethical code and quality standards for practice, an ensemble of methods and techniques adequate to the target population. Such a perspective requires a re-conceptualisation, re-systematisation and re-conciliation between classic and modern in the area of methodology specific to career counselling (methods, means, techniques and instruments) function of the ever-broader criteria and domains. The local social and economic dynamics requires complex and professional career counselling services, mainly offered by various institutionalised networks in the fields of education and employment. The counsellor’s competence to evaluate is fundamental, together with the competence in individual and/or group counselling, implementing career development programmes, information management, counselling groups with special needs, knowledge of career counselling theories, making use of the computer technology and communications.

In the psychological evaluation with a view to career counselling, the role of the counsellor is crucial concerning: the decision to evaluate the client, the choice of methods or instruments, the administration, scoring and interpretation of results, and the communication tailored to each client.

Since there is a tendency that more evaluation instruments (interests, aptitudes, helping decision-making, etc.) be available in electronic format (as well as on the Internet), the counsellors are introduced to new matters of a technological, ethical nature and related to information, counselling and guidance at a distance: it is a question of getting thoroughly acquainted with the distance counselling by computerized means, the relevance and weight of such resources in distance counselling, the personal impact and the social effects of the Internet evaluations.

Counsellors must be aware of the responsibility when they step in between their clients (with all their characteristics) and the current offers in education, training and labour.

In fact, what should a good professional know?

Counsellors should have a thorough knowledge of (Herr; Cramer; 1996):

- the methods, techniques and instruments for evaluating certain characteristics and individual features of clients, such as: aptitudes, personality, interests and values in the professional sphere, knowledge acquired in school, and work experience;
- personal learning and decision-making styles, self-image, hobbies, maturity of the career choices, work environments, social roles, etc.;
- particular conditions of various work environments: tasks, norms, schedule, quality requirements, whether the work involves mostly physical or mental effort;
- potential characteristics of the clients: social and cultural backgrounds, living conditions, gender status, stereotypes regarding work and social positions, types of disabilities and the funds accessible for education / training;
- use of the information and communications technology (ICT) for evaluation with a view to career counselling;
- apply evaluation procedures set by authors of evaluation instruments;
- score and interpret the evaluation results, as well as formulate conclusions so as to be understood by clients;
- choose instruments and techniques adequate to the problems and special situation of any client with a view to perform a realistic evaluation in a context and with a productive outcome.

It is useful to mention at this point that the process of presenting the results to tests / inventories / questionnaires / knowledge tests, etc. given to clients must generally go through the following steps:

- developing a counsellor-client relationship based on trust, cooperation, interest in the latter's problems and solving them in common;
- recalling the context in which the evaluation instrument was used and the personal state the client was in (emotionally, physically, etc.);
- identifying possible disturbing factors in the evaluation and the difficulty of the test itself (language, types of tasks, marking, etc.);
- keeping in mind the purpose of the evaluation and the types of items requiring an answer;

- specifying the significance of the investigated psychological processes, clarifying the concepts used: interests, aptitudes, values, etc.;
- asking clients to give their opinions on the tasks, the emotions experienced, the expectations raised by the evaluation;
- explaining the value of the clients' own performance (comparing it against the performance obtained in other evaluation contexts, against certain norms/standards, the significance of omissions and errors, correcting and marking, if applicable), etc.;
- initiating a career development plan in cooperation with the client.

In classifying the methods employed in career counselling the following criteria may be held in sight: *clients' needs, purpose and means by which counselling activities are carried out, the stages in the process, the phases of a counselling sessions, types of counselling approaches, degree of instruments standardization.*

According to the purpose of counselling activities, the methods are generally classified as follows:

- *Methods to gather information on the client:* psychological test, questionnaire, observation, interview, anamnesis, autobiography, self-characterization, school record, focus group, opinion poll, knowledge assessment test, analysis of biographical data, analysis of the activity products, SWOT analysis, portfolio, etc.
- *Communication methods:* conversation, role-play, simulation, exercise, narration, pedagogical game, Philips 6/6.
- *Client information methods:* materials used to spread information among and for the clients (leaflets, guides, other media products), occupational profiles, conferences, personal reading, presentation movies, commenting on the radio or TV shows.
- *Methods of investigating the labour market:* exercises to develop job hunting skills, simulating work situations, orientation tours, work *shadowing*, ICT in job tracking, educational fairs, job fairs, mini-stages in enterprises, polls to identify needs, case studies.
- *Methods of personal marketing and information management:* writing a CV and a letter of intent, sitting in a job interview, analysing / drawing up a media ad; databases / portals on education and training, professions, jobs.
- *Methods of career planning and development:* action plan, personal project, weighing alternatives, values clarification, competence survey.

In the Compendium, the presentation of the methods and techniques employed in career counselling follows a common framework:

- **History**
- **Theoretical background**
- **Method presentation**
- **Target population**
- **Examples, case studies, exercises**
- **Method evaluation**
- **Bibliography**

This unique framework allows counsellors to compare between the various methods and techniques and decide whether to make any personal or institutional purchase / adaptation / elaboration of the respective instruments and integrate them in their own portfolio for better working with the clients.

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Holland's Inventories

Self-Directed Search (SDS)

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History

John Holland's theory was developed in 1966 and continually improved in 1973, 1985 and 1992. *The theory of vocational choice* was an immediate success because it provided professional counsellors with a comprehensible and easy to apply conceptual framework, whereas clients entering the social and work life understand how personal and environmental factors interact, and ultimately how this process facilitates decision-making.

Two instruments support the application of Holland's theory: *Vocational Preference Inventory*: VPI (1985) and *Self-Directed Search*: SDS (1994).

Theoretical background

The essence of Holland's and his collaborators' theoretical development consists in the fact that making vocational choices is "an extension of the personality" of any individual, who finds in the particularities of career development the road to self-assertion through interests and values. Thus, "the distinct way of structuring in the personality of any individual a system of interests and attitudes shapes the direction of career guidance. The degree of compatibility between interests and a certain career choice awards personal satisfaction regarding the tasks of one's own profession." (Jigău, 2001). Holland states

that we can speak of the presence or absence of satisfaction in work to the extent that a number of personality traits match several aspects of the same work environments. In other words, if the Realistic personality type, for instance, matches several factors in the Realistic vocational field, we can anticipate the professional satisfaction of individuals belonging to this type.

Holland concludes that:

- individuals have different combinations of specific individual traits;
- certain traits become relatively stable after adolescence (recent research has confirmed the fact that the process of building interest patterns become stable by the age of 25);
- choosing an occupation is a way of self-expression;
- the members of the same activity field have similar personality structures and histories;
- professionals in certain fields who have similar personality structures will react in the same way in similar work situations;
- satisfaction, stability and professional status depend on the congruence between one's own personality and the work environment;
- the majority of individuals can be grouped into six personality types and as many work types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional;
- individuals aspire to those work environments and activities that allow them to capitalize on their qualities and personal values;
- success in an occupation / profession requires certain combinations of traits / characteristics on the part of individuals; these combinations (of aptitudes, interests, temperamental aspects, attitudes, values) are relatively similar for people in the same profession;
- the results of evaluation through psychological tests of traits / characteristics and the analysis of the set of factors leading to success in a certain occupation for those who are already performing it, may represent a basis to identifying the suitable occupation for someone or the right person for the job and, implicitly, a means of anticipating the success at the workplace and personal satisfaction.

Holland's theory regarding the vocational choices represents the conceptual background of the SDS Inventory. The privileged categories of relationships: "trait-factor" or "matching the person to the environment" are supported by a series of hypotheses targeting the existence of distinct personality categories and as many specific work environments. In these terms, it is estimated that people will seek those positions which they believe will enhance personal and professional success, satisfaction and

advancement, self-expression and sharing of the values they believe in. *“The ‘trait and factor’ theory stems from the premise that there is a strong connection between people’s system of interests and their operational aptitudes. The choice of a profession (job) is thus a specific process reflecting a characteristic stage for each individual, namely maturity of personality. Holland also states that personality types correspond to as many types of work or lifestyle. Thus, any person will opt for a position or lifestyle which will allow making use of and putting into practice his or her aptitudes, abilities and skills with a view to establishing one’s value as a person.”* (Jigău, 2001).

Method presentation

Self-Directed Search is an Inventory exploring aspirations, interests, activities and competences, that allows clients (through self-administration and self-scoring) to understand the way these factors might be connected with certain occupations (since there are several professions suitable for each person, that match their personality structure). SDS consists in an “evaluation brochure” facilitating the identification of the occupation corresponding to the personal code obtained as a result of applying the inventory of interests.

Holland identifies six personality types characterized by professional preferences. He states that work environments can also be classified by the same criterion. Consequently, vocational choices will be determined by how lasting these preferences for the six domains of human activity are.

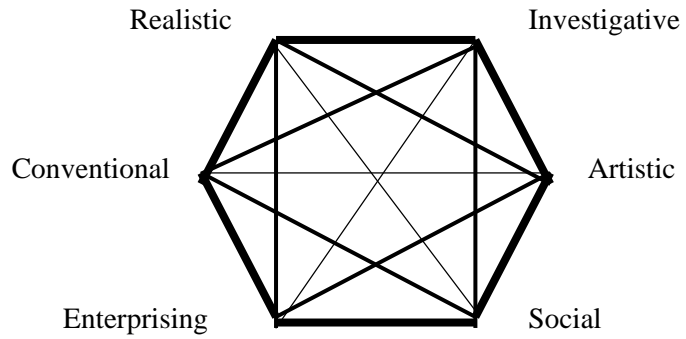
In addition, Holland affirms that the types of rejections people operate accordingly, also characterize each category of individuals:

Personality types:	Activities rejected:
Realistic	social and educational
Investigative	persuasive, social and repetitive work
Artistic	systematic, office, business
Social	manual, technical, work with materials and machines
Enterprising	scientific, analytic, systematic
Conventional	unstructured, unsystematic, artistic




The six connected personality categories and work environments are: Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E) and Conventional (C).

They are graphically represented by means of a hexagon.

R = Realistic
 I = Investigative
 A = Artistic
 S = Social
 E = Enterprising
 C = Conventional



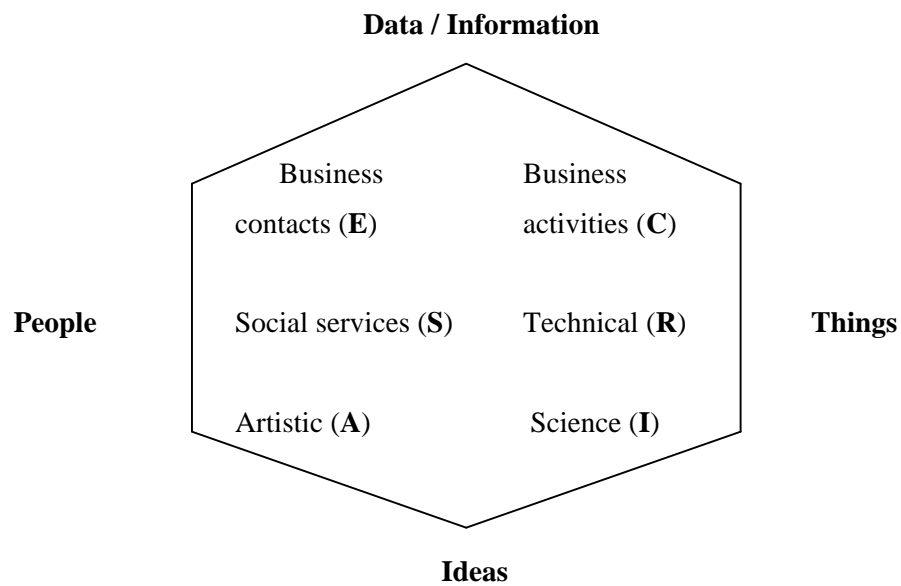
Degree of consistency

High 
 Medium 
 Low 

Personality patterns

RC, RI, IR, IA, AI, AS, SA, SE, ES, EC, CE, CR
 RE, RA, IC, IS, AR, AE, SI, SC, EA, ER, CS, CI
 RS, IE, AC, SR, EI, CA

The same classification of complementary work environments and personality types can also be represented like this:



A description of Holland personality types applied to work environment and typical client behaviour is presented below.

Realistic (R)

The Realistic environment: requires physical activities, tool, apparatus, machines handling and consequently an individual must have technical competence that allows working with objects rather than interacting with people.

The Realistic personality type: realistic individuals enjoy using tools, instruments, caring for plants and animals, working outdoors; they have or develop physical and handling aptitudes in the area of practical activities and exhibit higher motivation for things, money, status and less for human relationships.

The behaviour of Realistic clients: they expect concrete, direct answers from the counsellor, which should be immediately applicable to the problem that brought them to there in the first place; occasionally they have difficulties in expressing the precise need for counselling, expressing feelings, motives and interests; they enjoy talking however about their practical activities and hobbies.

Investigative (I)

The Investigative environment: requires the investigation of the causes behind various phenomena and the seeking of solutions to problems through specific methods and techniques.

The Investigative personality type: they prefer systematic and independent research, in order to find out causal explanations, observe, learn, evaluate, analyse and find solutions to problems; to this end they make use of personal resources of intelligence, abstract thinking, intuition, creativity, capacity to identify and solve problems.

The behaviour of Investigative clients: they are distressed by unsolved problems and unanswered questions; for them these represent challenges they like to have under control; the counsellor is a discussion partner in their dominantly rational and much less emotional process of career development.

Artistic (A)

The Artistic environment: is open, free, with unstructured working hours, requiring initiative and appreciating to the maximum a personal way of artistic and emotional expression.

The Artistic personality type: individuals with artistic aptitudes, abilities, intuition, open to an emotional approach to the world; they enjoy making recourse to imagination and creativity and express themselves in an original and unsystematic manner.

The behaviour of Artistic clients: they prefer an approach to counselling in an unconventional manner, making use of examples, written materials, criticising, comparing, joking; they prefer individual counselling to group counselling, and the decision-making is dominantly emotional and to a lesser degree rational and systematic.

Social (S)

The Social environment: offers the opportunity to discuss, be flexible, listen to others; communication skills, sympathetic attitude, generosity, friendliness, desire to help others are highly valued in the fields of education, social work, health care, etc.

The Social personality type: enjoy working with people, so as to inform, counsel, help, instruct, educate, train, take care of; can use language creatively to this end.

The behaviour of Social clients: oriented towards social exchange, explicitly express the aspirations to relate socially in an altruistic manner, enjoy group activities, cooperation, informal activities; offer to help the counsellors in their activity; they are on occasion too garrulous.

Enterprising (E)

The Enterprising environment: leads and persuades people to act in order to attain the purposes of an organization, financial or economic as a rule; such environments offer power, high social status and prosperity.

The Enterprising personality type: self-confident, assertive people who enjoy taking risks, persuading, leading and influencing people for the attainment of purposes of an organization, be it their own businesses, reaching important social positions and wealth; they prefer leading to being led.

The behaviour of Enterprising clients: dominantly affirmative, they express their feelings and intentions (when socially accepted), moreover they rather persuade others to act according to their own convictions instead of helping them; on occasion they overestimate themselves and inaccurately value their competences and skills; they are exceedingly competitive and often clash with their peers, anxious to reach key positions in organizations.

Conventional (C)

The Conventional environment: it implies organization and planning, work is usually done in offices and concerns keeping evidence, making statistics, drawing up reports; work with documents of any nature is orderly, any activity is predictable and conforms to a routine, indications come from superiors or coordinators.

The Conventional personality type: enjoy working with numbers, data and information, meticulously, accurately, in a detailed and systematic manner; do not mind receiving instructions from other people; prefer to be in control, not improvise in critical situations or make decisions.

The behaviour of Conventional clients: behave conventionally, are orderly, systematic, with a sense of hierarchy, and trust; they are less willing to approach the possibility of occupational alternatives and poorly structured working environments; their need for

order can show its worth in fields such as finance, banking, organization of educational activities, conferences, accounting, data processing.

In order to have a synthesis image of the characteristics attached to the personality types defined by Holland it is useful to consult the following lists of traits specific to the categories these inventories operate with – RIASEC (also useful as a self-evaluation instrument):

Realistic	Investigative	Artistic	Social	Enterprising	Conventional
conformist	analytic	complicated	persuasive	adventurous	conformist
franc	cautious	disorderly	cooperative	ambitious	diligent
honest	critic	emotional	friendly	preoccupied	careful
humble	curious	expressive	generous	dominating	conservative
material	independent	idealistic	helpful	energetic	inhibited
natural	intellectual	imaginative	idealistic	impulsive	submissive
persistent	introvert	impractical	perspicacious	optimistic	orderly
practical	methodical	impulsive	kind	pleasure- driven	persistent
modest	modest	independent	responsible	popular	practical
timid	precise	intuitive	sociable	self-confident	calm
stable	rational	nonconformist	tactful	sociable	unimaginative
calculated	reserved	original	understanding	garrulous	efficient

In fact, there are very few cases of “pure” personality types and work environments; more often we encounter combined types. This is precisely why “**The Holland Code**” employs three letters to describe each personality type and work environment (e.g.: EIA, ISE, CAS); these letters are the initials of the categories described above (R, I, A, S, E, C).

For instance, a library worker (Sharf, 1997) will not be labelled with C (conventional) alone; he or she could be Conventional (C) firstly, but Investigative (I) second, and Social (S) third; in sum, the code will be **CIS**.

For a counsellor, the Holland personality code could be **SAE** (type S – Social is dominant, with two additional types: A – Artistic and E – Enterprising).

Three supplementary concepts complete the conceptualisation of the “trait and factor theory”; they are: *congruence, difference and consistence*.

Congruence

Congruence refers to the relation between the personality type and the type of work environment; the closer the codes, the more congruent the relation. For instance, if a Realistic type works in a Realistic environment, it is said that the relation between the personality type and the type of work environment is congruent; on the other hand, if a Social type is employed in an Artistic environment, the relation is incongruent, and the person will be relatively frustrated and unsatisfied.

A person to whom we can attribute the code RSI will have a high degree of satisfaction if the work environment is also RSI (case of high congruence) and a lower degree of satisfaction if the work environment is RSA (less congruent). Consequently, an RCA type environment will be less congruent with the personality type RSI (mentioned above) and totally incongruent with the type AEC, for example. These concrete situations are frequent in counselling and if we take into account the congruence factor we greatly enhance adequate counselling to the system of interests and values of the client; it is the counsellor's task to evaluate and assist clients in finding the appropriate (congruent) work environment, in accordance with the beneficiaries personality structure.

Difference

Difference refers to the relation between types and their relative importance. People and work environments differ in that they belong to one or several types. There are people who fully conform to some of the Holland codes, whereas others seem to have characteristics from all six types; the same can be for the work environments they prefer.

People who like to do some things and dislike others can be easily distinguishable by interests; similarly, there are people who can perform any activity well and consequently they will not be differentiated in the Holland's approach.

A high score in any type indicates a differentiated profile, while a non-differentiated profile comes from low scores.

Just like types of people vary in terms of difference, so do the work environments. This is precisely why some types of people can find professionally satisfying categories of activities (congruence) in various work environments (incongruence), because work environments vary with respect to the degree of difference.

People undifferentiated as type may encounter difficulties in decision-making with respect to selecting a career. The counsellor's role in these situations is supporting clients in identifying interests more accurately and setting priorities, that is "differentiating" themselves and thus becoming more likely to select a work environment suited to their structure of interests and aptitudes.

Consistency

Consistency refers to the level of similarity between types when compared. It has been found that certain personality types have more in common with certain others. Thus, the Social type has more in common with the Artistic (they are closer on the hexagon typology, therefore highly consistent) than with the Realistic (they are opposite on the hexagon graph, therefore very little consistent).

Work environments can also be judged in terms of consistency: a Realistic and a Social environment are inconsistent (RS), whereas a Social and an Enterprising one (SE) are consistent.

The number of occupations with low consistency in types is small. Nevertheless some can be found to combine Artistic interests with numerical skills – the Conventional type – and those in an Enterprising environment – ACE (for example, starting a personal business in selling music devices: audio tapes, CDs, sound equipment, etc.).

An additional aspect related to these three concepts (Congruence, Difference and Consistency) is **Identity**. It refers to the stability of the professional interests and the clarity of the aims in one's career. Identity is an important goal of counselling and it directly results from it: having clarified their objectives, having made a decision and drawn up a career plan, individuals are aware of the advantages and obstacles of their choices. These aspects are investigated through *My Vocational Situation* (MVS).

Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) was used by Holland for two purposes: to develop a theory with respect to the relation between the personality types and the work environments, and together with the *Self-Directed Search* (SDS) to verify and validate the theory; both instruments consistently coming to the aid of individual counselling.

The Holland Self-Directed Search – Form R has the following components:

Form R Assessment Booklets with the following sections: *Desired Vocations*, *SDS Scales*, *How to organize answers*, *What your code means*, *The next steps*, *Useful books*.

Occupations Finder and Alphabetized Occupations Finder Booklets includes – in addition to previous editions – new occupations emerged as a result of the development of ICT and the required information on the education and training.

You and Your Career Booklets explains to users the six personality types that SDS operates with and offers explanations related to the interpretation of the scores obtained by clients while administering the Inventory.

Leisure Activities Finder Booklets enumerates over 700 leisure activities meant to support those who plan such activities and people close to retirement.

Educational Opportunities Finder Booklets offers a list of 750 domains of study at the post-secondary level placed in relation with the Holland codes, meant to support clients with options regarding education and training.

The SDS Technical Manual describes the stages of elaborating the instrument, novelties in the fourth edition, studies, research and technical information on other forms of SDS (R, E, CP, Career Explorer).

The Professional User's Guide contains practical information on all types of SDS forms, the theory underlying these instruments, administration guides and support materials for scoring, interpretation, counsellor training, and practical suggestions regarding the SDS.

In principal, the SDS contains an **Evaluation Inventory** and a **Supporting list** (meant to facilitate finding the occupation most suited to the Holland code).

The Evaluation Inventory has four scales:

1. **Activities** (11 items – for each of the six personality types) – 66 items.
2. **Competences** (11 items – for each of the six personality types) – 66 items.
3. **Occupations** (14 items – for each of the six personality types) – 84 items.
4. **Self-assessment** (2 items for each of the six personality types) – 12 items.

There are 228 items in total but with uneven distribution among the four scales – and a section titled **Vocational aspirations** (with up to eight occupations).

The scales 1, 2, 3 and 4 are used for scoring each of the six personality types. The level of frequency of the scores in the six personality types yields the order of the three letters in the Holland code. The section – **Aspirations** (in vocational field) – can be employed to validate the score / code obtained. It will be then used to find the equivalent **work environment** in the **Supporting list** (an occupation with the same code).

This instrument is very popular in the counselling practice in the United States and Canada, and also in other countries with a tradition in counselling, due to a pragmatic and comprehensible approach to counselling.

In the *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* (1989), 12099 occupations are listed, accompanied by their Holland code. In compiling this dictionary, data regarding the analysis of jobs and the personality profile of the person occupying the position were used; the following was considered important: required education and training, aptitudes, temperamental traits, interests, physical requirements, in correlation with the conditions of the work environment. This Dictionary is a transposition of the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (DOT) into Holland's coded language (RIASEC).

Concretely, The Dictionary includes: the Holland code, the occupations titles, the levels of education and practical experience required, the DOT code (9 figures, yielding a description of the vocational profile).

In using this Dictionary several aspects must be kept in mind:

- Classifications are not strictly distinct; there are occupations that may have been associated to different Holland codes (e.g.: CR occupations from the Conventional categories are similar to RC occupations from the Realistic category); more, occupations accepting lower levels of education and training are less differentiated among themselves compared to the occupations requiring higher education.
- In the classification of occupations many stereotypes regarding the content of work have crept in (“a Realistic never does paperwork”, “a Conventional never handles tools”, “an Investigative does not need artistic opinions”, etc.) which are not completely true.

- An individual personality structure has combinations – in different proportions – of traits, aptitudes, interests, attitudes, etc. so that no person belongs solely to one personality type, neither does he/she have unrepeatable traits as such. Consequently the same category of occupations may correspond to individuals with relatively different personality structures or, in other words, more than one occupation can be recommended to one single person.
- It also works the other way around: a certain profession can be practiced – at a satisfactory level – by individuals with different personality structures, but only certain categories are capable of high performance.

The Holland inventory is available under the following formats: paper-pencil, computerized (SDS: CV published in 1985 – in DOS – and revised in 1996 – Windows) and online (since 1999, for a fee, *Form R*: www.self-directed-search.com).

Time of administration: 35-45 minutes.

There are computerized versions of SDS (*Form R* and *Form CP*) compatible with Apple and IBM. Both versions list the steps to be taken for completing the inventory. In this situation it is the computer that calculates the RIASEC scores at the end of the SDS application and yields the client's Holland code. To this end, computers work with an extensive database and seek occupations compatible with the client's code, offering a printable "personalized report".

The computerized version of SDS allows for a quicker administration of this Inventory, immediate and error-free scoring, it is more attractive to most clients, offers occupation options right away, as well as "interpretations" of the client's code, etc.

Target population

Self-Directed Search comprises the following categories of instruments:

<i>Self-Directed Search – Form CP</i>	<i>for pupils / teenagers</i>
<i>Self-Directed Search – Form R</i>	<i>for adults and students</i>
<i>Self-Directed Search – Form E</i>	<i>for the less educated</i>

The purpose of employing the instrument is to support clients in identifying the suitable occupations for their interests and abilities.

The Self-Directed Search – The Holland Interest Inventory is a work instrument simulating career counselling and it is self-administered (with individuals or groups), it has self-scoring and self-interpretation scales; the presence of a counsellor may be necessary in some situations and for certain categories of clients.

Examples, case studies, exercises

The theory and evaluation method, as Holland himself admits (1992), only covers part of the variables involved in vocational choice; other factors intervene in the process, such as: age, gender, level of education, social position, system of personal aptitudes, abilities and skills, etc.

Examples of associating Holland personality types with certain occupations or professions:

Realistic	Investigative	Artistic	Social	Enterprising	Conventional
Mechanic	Statistician	Actor	Counsellor	Car dealer	Accountant
Farmer	Geologist	Choreographer	Teacher	Cook	Credits/ insurance clerk
Electrician	Meteorologist	Composer	Historian	Detective	Medical records clerk
Dental technician	Computer programmer	Fashion designer	Human resource worker	Paramedic	Postal worker
Pilot	Physician	Painter	Social worker	Hotel manager	Receptionist
Engineer	Psychologist	Musician	Journalist	Lawyer	Secretary

Many US universities present their educational and training offer in Holland's terms, through services of information and counselling.

Method evaluation

It is useful for a counsellor to know a client's personality code beforehand or to find it out by applying the Holland inventories. This code gives important clues regarding an individual's range of interests and helps counsellors associate clients' personality

characteristics to information on professions and occupations, give advice on the recommendable work environment. At the same time, the code is important when the counsellor recommends related work environments, in case the clients wish to change their place of work or engage a different occupation or profession.

Recent studies show that a high congruence of personality types and work environments is not linearly correlated with the professional satisfaction or lack of stress. In addition, the Holland personality types are noticed not to be found in other personality types investigated by means of psychological instruments. These facts do not diminish in any way the practical importance of the “trait and factor theory”, since, as Holland himself affirmed, it is destined for career support and not psychological evaluation.

Holland’s theory and the practical aspects resulting from it are widely accepted by counsellors because it is an instrument easy to apply, easily comprehensible by clients during the interview, practically concerning the (primary) systematisation of personality types and work environments (so diverse in real life). Their hierarchic description by means of three code letters is another important operational element.

Holland’s theory and the adjacent SDS instruments do not offer an explicit and complex image of the process of how vocational choice works; nevertheless clients and counsellors prefer the inventory and its logic. No doubt, the critics of Holland personality types are right about its simplicity, as well as the statistical support of some key concepts of the theory (consistency, difference), the justification of the “association” between occupations and personality types. The data regarding the predictive value of the “code” in its “confrontation” with the entire occupational reality throughout the life of a client, as well as the validity of this typology regarding certain population categories are still under debate.

Specific research has been made regarding the relationship between Holland types and:

- professional aspirations (partial correspondence with Holland personal code);
- gender characteristics (or identification with a gender-specific role);
- academic interests;
- education levels of the clients;
- influence of cultural patterns (professional stereotypes) on vocational choices;
- self-image or self-evaluation of the personal aptitudes;
- results obtained with other instruments (*Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, *Strong Interest Inventory*, *Career Thoughts Inventory* – Sampson);
- relation between parents’ Holland codes and those of their children (mainly congruent), etc.

Comparative studies have been made between the paper-pencil SDS versions and the computerized ones or those on the Internet, in terms of the clients’ preference regarding

their administration (the computer version is preferred), the equivalents of the results obtained by filling out the various formats (results are relatively similar), administration time (the Internet-based version is the shortest, then the computer one and ultimately the paper-pencil), the degree of "dependency" on the counsellor (lesser or null in the case of the electronic versions).

As unanimously admitted, among the **advantages** of this means of evaluation we enumerate: ease in administration, easy scoring, easy calculation of the Holland personal code, and quick identification of occupations with a code similar to the personal one.

It is qualified As a relative **disadvantage** the fact that some clients need several sessions subsequent to testing in order to receive answers related to the logic of the Inventory, the marking, the use of the answer sheet, the way of identifying occupations suited to the personal code. It is also to be mentioned that the Inventory has limited predictive power, because the clients who conformed to the reasoning and the "suggestions" of the personal code in their vocational choice are not as a result significantly happier with their profession compared to people not having followed such protocol.

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Kuder Occupational Interest Survey

(KOIS)

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History

Frederic Kuder (1903-2000) launched the *Kuder Preference Records (KPR)* in the 1940s on the market of counselling instruments; ever since over 100 million people in exploring career development directions have used this instrument.

A first revision of the Inventory took place in 1943 – *Kuder Preference Records*, followed by the *Kuder General Interest Survey, Form E (KGIS)*, *Kuder Occupational Interest Survey, Form DD (KOIS)* and the most recent – *Kuder Career Search with Person Match*.

Theoretical background

Kuder's working hypothesis in compiling his surveys springs from the observation that each individual gradually develops certain patterns of specific occupational preferences and behaviour, compatible with certain professions or jobs. Clients' answers to the survey are confronted with reference answers, allowing on the one hand by comparison the validation of the new profile obtained, and on the other hand the formulation of the hypothesis that clients with the same profiles as that of persons already employed who have been successful in a position will "match" with the same occupations.

Kuder created items intending to measure the elements considered important, desirable and required in certain occupations, through investigation of clients' system of interests. In a statistical analysis of answers it can be verified to what extent the items truly discriminate certain group criteria specific to certain occupations.

For instance, items such as:

- “repairing the car in the week-end;
- putting a watch together;
- changing the fittings of a leaking faucet;
- fixing a bicycle”, etc.

are considered significant in differentiating people of Mechanical interests from those who have no interests of the sort.

Kuder also states that when people choose one of these items, they have the tendency to choose others from the same category and the other way around. This gives us an insight with respect to the interests systems polarization: when a certain area is chosen, some others are rejected (Cottle, 1968).

Method presentation

Each item of Kuder's survey is made up of a set of three sentences connected to activities specific to the occupational field under investigation. Only two of the three statements require an answer: the best liked and the most disliked are chosen.

Below is an example:

		I like best		I dislike most
A	Repairing a faulty watch	○	A	○
B	Book-keeping	○	B	○
C	Painting a picture	○	C	○

As it can be seen, unlike the Strong inventory (SVIB) – which compares clients' answers to answers given by individuals successful in and satisfied with certain occupations – the *KPR* survey requires marking the preference or the dislike, offering an image of areas of personal interest, materialized in elements necessary in certain occupations.

In the two cases, after administering the interest inventory, the counsellor could say:

- in the case of the Strong inventory (SVIB): “your system of interests is similar to that of a successful architect”;
- in the case of the Kuder survey (KPR): “your interests point to social services and business, while they are far from mechanics and music”.

The overall purpose of the Kuder inventories is consequently to investigate occupational preferences and implicitly to facilitate identifying needs for education and training so as to enhance decision-making concerning the start of social and working life, designing or identifying career development directions that “open the area of possible options to clients instead of limiting it”.

Kuder General Interest Survey, Form E (KGIS), the 1988 edition, is an evaluation instrument for young people (6th to 12th grade) in order to support selection for enrolment in higher education and for adults (involved in continuing vocational training) with a view to exploring the world of occupations and career development.

Scales employed by the Kuder inventories:

- **Outdoor (0)**
- **Mechanical (1)**
- **Computational (2)**
- **Scientific (3)**
- **Persuasive (4)**
- **Artistic (5)**
- **Literary (6)**
- **Musical (7)**
- **Social Service (8)**
- **Clerical (9)**

10 scores are thus obtained for the professional fields mentioned above; there is also a score highlighting the level of trustworthiness of the results (scale **V**).

It is also possible to identify the correspondence with the three-letter Holland code. Here they are:

- *Outdoor* and *Mechanical* activities correspond to **R** (Realistic).
- *Scientific* activities correspond to **I** (Investigative).
- *Artistic*, *Literary*, *Musical* activities correspond to **A** (Artistic).
- *Social Service* activities correspond to **S** (Social).
- *Persuasive* activities correspond to **E** (Enterprising).
- *Computational* and *Clerical* activities correspond to **C** (Conventional).

The *KGIS Form E* inventory is available in 3 versions: manual scoring, scanning answer sheets and electronic scoring (with special software).

The inventory comprises 168 situations associated to various occupations. Each of these is subdivided into three activities from which the respondent must choose the most preferred, the least agreeable, while the neutral is left unmarked.

Time of administration is 45-60 minutes.

Consulting the standards of the inventory (percentiles grouped according to: high, low, and medium, by gender), occupational profiles are obtained which can be accompanied by additional explanations and “interpretations”. The reference scores do not differentiate by any other criteria, such as social status, wealth, ethnic origin.

Kuder Occupational Interest Survey, Form DD (KOIS) is the revised 1985 edition of the 1979 inventory and is destined to investigating professional interests of high school students (senior years), undergraduates, and adults of any age. The objectives of using the instrument target self-assessment, career counselling and finding new alternatives for personal career development.

This new version includes 100 questions – grouped in three – requiring compulsory / forced answers for the best liked, the least liked, and the neutral occupation, last remains unmarked. The questions are grouped in six levels of vocabulary competence and target various occupations, preferred activities, hypothetical work or life situations (visiting a museum, reading in a library, hobbies, etc.).

Client answer patterns have been compared to those of people already involved in academic or work activities who consider themselves satisfied with their choices and the nature of their work.

The *KOIS – Form DD* inventory is an instrument for investigating occupational interests more effectively than the previous versions, through manuals, administrative and user guides, or scales meant to help draw up an occupational profile. In the General Kuder Manual published in 1991 a procedure is presented, which allows converting the scores obtained into Holland codes.

Contents of *KOIS*:

- *Estimate of Professional Interests*: Outdoor, Mechanical, Computational, Scientific, Persuasive, Artistic, Literary, Musical, Social Service and Clerical activities. The instrument was standardised on a group of 1583 men and 1631 women, high school or college students.
- *Occupational scales*: 109, of which 33 are standardised according to group criterion – men and as many women, as well as 32 only men and 11 only women. The instrument was standardised on a group of over 200 people (men and women) of 25 years or older, who declared themselves to have been employed for more than 3 years and confessed to experiencing professional satisfaction in their field of activity.
- *Scales for pupils and students*: 40, of which: 14 are standards according to group criterion – men and as many women, as well as 8 only men and 4 only women. The instrument was standardised on a group of over 200 people

(men and women), adolescents or young adults from various high schools and universities.

- *Experimental scales*: 8.
- *Score V*: to verify the overall validity of answers.

Numeric scores obtained by clients: *Occupational scales* and *Scales for pupils and students* are Lambda coefficients giving information on the correspondence / similitude between the answers to inventory and the answers given by the reference group.

There is also an electronic version of the instrument: *KOIS DD/PC* since 1993, which implies the installation of software on the personal computer. The items appear on a screen and the answers are given by the keyboard: 20 minutes are gained compared to the paper-pencil version. The result is obtained within moments and it is displayed on the screen, subsequently to be printed out for the client. The advantage is that one can change the answers, detail occupational alternatives, request the identification of occupations suitable for the profile obtained, verify options already made or control the extent to which the profile obtained is in accordance or not with the client's expectations. The respective programme can also process paper-pencil form by scanned answer sheets.

Kuder College and Career Planning System are available online in an interactive form and represent one of the latest series of evaluation instruments employed in counselling (see www.kuder.com).

The online versions are available for a fee.

The following publications are also recommended for school counsellors and other practitioners employing the Kuder instruments:

- *Kuder Occupational Interest Survey, General Manual* (to help school counsellors and career counsellors offer answers to clients in the process of understanding the evaluations made).
- *Kuder DD Control Card* (for school counsellors and career counsellors in their correspondence with evaluated clients).
- *Kuder DD Scoring Service Envelope* (for school counsellors and career counsellors in their correspondence with evaluated clients).

The Kuder Career Search (representing the third generation of evaluation instruments for vocational interests) together with the *Person Match* is also one of the most recent evaluation instruments for the professional interests of the adults. The questionnaire is available online, scoring is very quick, which makes it preferred by clients who need no interpretation of their scores of profiles. Nevertheless, the *Person Match* part of *Kuder Career Search* is destined for adults in need of counselling for decisions in their professional area. More often than not, the evaluation performed will strengthen the clients' opinions about themselves, however they feel the need to see a specialist to confirm that their professional self-image is accurate and profitable regarding their future career. The results obtained from the administration of the inventory and the personal profile can also help adolescents identify the most appropriate way of pursuing their

studies (since the offers of educational systems have the same code system for areas of interest).

What is “*person matching*”?

As early as 1990, Kuder wrote “instead of matching people to jobs, why not match people to other people already employed?” This “matching” is advantageous because it introduces in the act of counselling testimonies from people employed in certain professions, and clients seek to see to what extent they can identify with these, while the interpretation of the score itself is of lesser importance. Each client is presented with the “job story” of 14 people with similar interests, even if employed in various fields. The counsellor’s question could be: “Which of these professional mini-autobiographies would be right for you?”. This procedure is fully justified by the fact that many people are interested in the people they might work with as much as in the job itself. These clients require answers to questions such as: “What kind of inter-human relationships are developed in certain work situations? How much freedom is there for creativity and personal initiative? What are the people with interests as myself like? Which aspects of their work would I enjoy and which wouldn’t I? Can I, finally, find a profession suited to all my preferences?”

Clients will thus notice that certain structures of professional interests can be compatible with several professional fields, occupations or jobs.

To the same end several Kuder instruments can be administered (e.g.: *The Kuder Career Search with Person Match*, *The Kuder Skills Assessment*) and their results can make up a “Kuder Portfolio” for each client, helping in decision-making and drawing up an individual career development plan. The following can also be added: information on the level of education and training, work experience, involvement in voluntary community work or extra-curricular activities, skills, aptitudes and talents, CV, etc.

The inventory consists of 60 items, and answering to the questions takes 20-30 minutes. There is a version where the counsellor makes the marking and the results are sent by mail to the client.

Target population

The *KOIS* target population is:

- students (6th to 12th grade) or in senior high school years;
- students and
- adults – any age range – wishing to change careers, (re)entering the labour market or enrol in training programmes.

Examples, case studies, exercises

The first Kuder inventory, paper-pencil (which yielded all the other versions), is in the form of a brochure containing the questions for identifying occupational interests, the corresponding answer sheet, and the occupational profile to be handed to the client. This inventory is applicable individually or in a group.

The instrument includes 168 question groups, printed in 14 set (each group comprising three questions) on each of the 12 pages of the brochure, in total 504 questions. In each three-question group the clients must mark the activity / situation they are **most** interested in (column **M**) and the one they are **least** interested in (column **L**). This way, in each group of three questions there will always remain an unmarked activity / situation (see Appendix 1 – Instructions).

The questions on the 12 pages are printed on increasingly shorter pages, so that the answer sheet at the end of the brochure should always be visible and so that the each new work page should offer only a column to mark. Having marked their options on the **Answer sheet**, 11 grids are placed over the sheets (V and 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

Scale V verifies the accuracy of completing the exercise; values below a certain minimal threshold imply reconsidering the results and checking whether the instructions were understood and the answers correctly marked.

The scales marked with 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 correspond to the ten domains of interest: Outdoor, (0), Mechanical (1), Computational (2), Scientific (3), Persuasive (4), Artistic (5), Literary (6), Musical (7), Social Service (8), Clerical (9).

Each score is obtained by adding up the answers identified with the 10 grids. The scores are compared against 10 standards expressed in percentages (corresponding to the 10 domains of interest). One identifies thus – in each category of vocational interests of the clients – three categories of intensity: *high* (100-75), *medium* (75-25) and *low* (25-0) without forgetting to take into account whether the respondent's gender.

The data obtained are transcribed on a sheet called **Vocational Profile**. It is handed to clients and it contains the results of the evaluation of their vocational interests in an easily understandable graphic format (see Appendix 2 – Vocational Profile). Certainly, each “personal profile” can be accompanied by a brief interpretation, offered to the client by the counsellor either in writing or verbally (see Appendix 3 – Brief interpretations of professional profiles).

Total administration time: 30-60 minutes.

Method evaluation

The Kuder inventory is an important working instrument in a counsellor's activity. The rather large number of questions ensures a high reliability of the vocational profiles and consequently the related counselling is more plausible to the client.

It is of interest to mention that longitudinal studies performed on the predictive (and persuasive) values of *KOIS* show that 51% of the clients who have completed these instruments have found employment and their job is among the first five recommended by the counsellor on the basis of the results suggested in the Inventory.

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Appendix 1

Occupational Interest Survey – Kuder * Form C

Instructions

This questions booklet aims to explore your interests / preferences regarding your future profession. There are no right or wrong answers. **An answer is right if it is true for you.**

On each page of the booklet you will find a list of possible options, grouped by threes. First **read each triplet**, decide **which situation interests you the MOST** and mark it by colouring the rectangle on the answer sheet in the column marked with **M** (most). Then identify the one **which interests you the LEAST** and, in a similar fashion, colour the rectangle in the column marked with **L** (least). Notice that one situation of the three will always remain unmarked on the answer sheet.

In the Example 1, the subject marked (by colouring the corresponding rectangle) that in the first group of activities **he/she would like visiting a museum the MOST** and **reading books in a library the LEAST**.

In the Example 2 the same subject indicated **liking collecting autographs the MOST** and **collecting butterflies the LEAST**.

Example 1

- N. Visiting a modern art gallery.
- P. Reading books in a library.
- Q. Visiting a museum.

M		L
	N	
	P	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Q	

Example 2

- a. Collecting autographs.
- b. Collecting coins.
- c. Collecting butterflies.

M		L
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	a	
	b	
	c	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Imagine that you would be able to accomplish all activities suggested, even the ones requiring special training. Choose as if all actions were equally familiar to you. Do not make choices based on the novelty of the situation for you or because the others show a preference in it.

In case you like or dislike all three activities, try nevertheless to differentiate them, making the two required choices. It is important to answer all questions. For each group of three, it is essential to select the one “**liked MOST**”, and “**liked LEAST**”, respectively.

Do not waste too much time on your decision. Make the decision on your own. If an answer does not represent your own option, it will not be able to contribute to giving a real image of your interests.

If you wish to change an answer, cross it out with an X, then tick the new answer.

Do not make any annotations on the brochure, except for the last page, which is the answer page.

* Instructions translated for this presentation.

Appendix 2

Vocational profile

Name First name Date of birth.....
 City / Town School Grade
 Date of taking the test..... Telephone Age Gender

Percentiles												
99	95	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	5	1
												0 OUTDOOR
												1 MECHANICAL
												2 COMPUTATIONAL
												3 SCIENTIFIC
												4 PERSUASIVE
												5 ARTISTIC
												6 LITERARY
												7 MUSICAL
												8 SOCIAL SERVICE
												9 CLERICAL
99	95	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	5	1
Percentiles												

Appendix 3

BRIEF INTERPRETATION OF PROFILE

- 0. OUTDOORS INTERESTS:** subjects prefer to carry out their work outdoors, raise animals, grow plants, build, etc.

Recommended occupations: forest engineer, agronomist, veterinary surgeon, farmer, forester, naturalist, geographer, sailor (captain, pilot), guard (hunting, fishing), guide (mountain), breeder (dogs, birds, fish, etc.), bee-keeper, garden designer, geologist, ecologist, etc.

- 1. MECHANICAL INTERESTS:** subjects prefer working with tools, machines and apparatus.

Recommended occupations: repairman (radio and TV), mechanic, plumber, watchmaker, technician or engineer, radio operator, plumber, electrician, phone operator, ceramist, train driver, aviation mechanic, etc.

- 2. COMPUTATIONAL INTERESTS:** subjects prefer working with numbers.

Recommended occupations: statistics teacher, mathematician, statistician, certified accountant, auditor, bank clerk, cashier, computer operator, etc.

- 3. SCIENTIFIC INTERESTS:** subjects prefer solving problems, discover new facts, explain, put forth ideas, etc.

Recommended occupations: researcher, physicist, chemist, physician, psychiatrist, nutritionist, surgeon, meteorologist, pharmacist, dentist, electronics engineer, biologist, chemist, programmer, lab worker, policeman (detective), optician, etc.

- 4. PERSUASIVE INTERESTS:** subjects prefer meeting people and convincing them, closing deals, negotiating, initiating various projects, buying, selling, etc.

Recommended occupations: advertisement agent, economist, public relations agent, shop manager, insurance director, human resources manager, bank manager, hotel manager, entrepreneur, salesman, courier, merchant, radio and TV host, entrepreneur, etc.

5. ARTISTIC INTERESTS: subjects prefer creating, especially visual arts.

Recommended occupations: painter, sculptor, architect, visual arts teacher, art gallery restorer, draughtsman, art photographer, engraver, hair stylist, fashion designer, interior designer decorator, stage designer, etc.

6. LITERARY INTERESTS: subjects prefer reading and writing.

Recommended occupations: journalist, writer, editor, historian, literature teacher, reporter, critic, stage actor, librarian, press reviewer, etc.

7. MUSICAL INTERESTS: subjects prefer music.

Recommended occupations: music teacher, stage actor (musicals), singer, instrumentalist, musician, composer, folklorist, etc.

8. SOCIAL SERVICE INTERESTS: subjects prefer helping people.

Recommended occupations: psychologist, sociologist, pedagogist, social worker, nurse, career counsellor, social medicine, school teacher, kindergarten teacher, manager, human resources manager, professor of social sciences, priest, etc.

9. CLERICAL INTERESTS: subjects prefer office work requiring accuracy, precision and correctness.

Recommended occupations: secretary, insurance clerk, receptionist, warehouse worker, hotel worker, insurance agent, computer operator, phone operator, etc.

Canadian Occupational Interest Inventory

(COII)

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History

This inventory of occupational interests (*Canadian Occupational Interest Inventory – COII*) is based on a number of five bipolar factors identified by Cottle (1968). The basic idea of the inventory is that within each factor (bipolar interest group) there are pairs of reciprocally excluded trends. Thus, within the first Factor (opposition: preference for activities with *Things* – preference for activities with *People*), it is assumed that subjects clearly interested in activities such as handling and/or using objects cannot be equally interested in interactions and/or communication with people.

Theoretical background

Psychological tests or inventories of interests yield one of the following:

- *Raw scores*: direct result, with no reference to other scores or norms.
- *Normative scores*: by comparing an individual score against the one obtained by a sample group, that is the external criteria (e.g. part of the population employed in a certain field against the entire working population).

- *Ipsative score (intra-individual)*: used in certain inventories of interests, when the clients choose between alternative situations (like – dislike, prefer working with people – prefer working with things); in these cases, the score is dependent of that obtained for another variable: the higher score for a variable, the lower the score for another, and the other way around.

The main technical characteristics of the ipsative scores are:

- “scores are always interpreted in pairs;
- each pair is independent from the others;
- these scores are directly obtained by requiring forced answers;
- total score is constant on a bi-polar scale.” (Bezanson, 1978).

Opposite scores are a result of the fact that the area of interests is a continuum scale, from very high to very low, and also of the fact that if a system of interests tends to focus on a certain area, other interests are implicitly rejected and/or become less represented. The increase and the decrease of interest in the two alternatives of the pair in the areas is constantly connected. An inventory of interests yields a normative score offering an image of one’s system of interests compared to that of a group of persons practicing certain professions. But to the same extent it is important to find out one’s area of interests without comparison against other persons or groups of persons, thus knowing one’s range of possible occupational choices.

Method presentation

In designing this instrument the starting point was that interest is an attitude oriented towards action, so the items were drawn up taking into account the activities most frequently performed by people involved in certain occupations. The activities presented in COII are grouped by threes and then paired (each pair being an item of the inventory).

For instance, the Factor *Things – People* (that is interest in)

A	B
gluing things together	illustrating a magazine
decorating a space of entertainment	drawing up an ad
building a warehouse	translating a text

The five Factors are named according to the bi-polar name and represent each category of preference for various activities.

The bi-polar factors of the COII:

Factor I	1. Things	versus	6. People
	Preference for activities that involve handling and/or using things		Preference for activities involving interaction and/or communication with people
Factor II	2. Business contacts	versus	7. Scientific
	Preference for activities involving direct communication with people with a view to selling and/or persuasion		Preference for activities involving research, using special knowledge and/or investigation in consensus with the methodology of scientific research
Factor III	3. Routine	versus	8. Creative
	Preference for activities performed in consensus with certain instructions and/or repetitive, systematic, concrete procedures		Preference for activities requiring artistic approach to things and ideas and/or formulating and using concepts
Factor IV	4. Social	versus	9. Solitary
	Preference for activities involving people as partners or beneficiaries of services		Preference for activities performed individually that involve operating objects
Factor V	5. Prestige	versus	0. Production
	Preference for activities that earn esteem and/or leadership		Preference for activities leading to getting tangible objects

The two terms of each Factor (e.g. *Things – People*) are considered “Scales”. Number 1 and 6 in the same example represent the number of the profile.

The COII inventory has 70 items, each grouping three bi-polar activities, selected in such a way as to represent in a balanced manner all the five Factors. Each of these Factors consists in a number of 14 items, grouped in four so-called “sectors”. These sectors have the following objectives:

- work;
- training;
- related activities;
- leisure.

Within each Factor, the preferences expressed for certain activities in these sectors give an indication about the consistency of the answers to the inventory and offer credibility to the profile obtained. Five such items are positioned in the sector Work and three in every other sector: Training, Related Activities, and Leisure.

The congruence of the profile results from comparing the scales against each other and appreciating the significance of the correlation coefficients obtained.

The inventory ends (the counsellor having made sure the respondent has understood the logic of the instrument and how to answer) with identifying the professions compatible with the system of preferences of the beneficiary in the list of occupations generated.

Poorly outlined or flat profiles pose interpretation problems and clients may view with reserve recommendations of too broad professional areas, as they are presented in the national classification of occupations (e.g. in Romania – COR: *major groups, major subgroups, minor groups*); clients prefer to be given *basic groups* and *component occupations*.

The instrument is completed with marking the choices for each item (the pairs of threes) in accordance with the preference for the activities proposed, based on an ascending eight-step scale, alphabetically marked (from **A** to **H**).

Interpreting the results involves studying the profile of the person tested and – according to the scores – establishing whether the profile is:

- clear, distinct, well-outlined;
- poorly outlined;
- flat.

This classification is made according to the positioning of scores obtained for the items in the inventory on the scale from **A** to **H**, corresponding to each Factor.

A clear, distinct, well-outlined profile implies that:

- the scores of at least two scales range from **E** to **H** or
- the score of at least one of the scales is either **G** or **H**.

In other words, a profile is well outlined if the scores range between **E** and **H** for all scales.

A poorly outlined profile occurs when:

- the scores of at least two scales are either **C** or **D** or
- the score of one of the scales is either **E** or **F**.

In other words, a profile is poorly outlined if the scores range between **C** and **D** for all scales.

A flat profile occurs when:

- the scores of at least four scales are either **A** or **B**, and
- the scores of the other scales are anywhere between **A** and **D**.

The individual profile of occupational interests thus obtained is confronted with the *Glossary of Interest Profiles – GIP* to facilitate the transposition of the results in terms compatible with those from the Classification of Occupations (in Canada).

COII requires forced answers despite the fact that, as the authors admit, some people will encounter difficulties in fulfilling this requirement (e.g. people who dislike almost everything or those who are exact, scrupulous or hesitant). On the other hand this type of forced choice is what people are faced with in their everyday lives and which is the most informative regarding their preference.

Scoring procedures – for COII – are described in *The Administration, Scoring and Interpretation Manual*. They broadly target the administration conditions, the scoring and the interpretation.

Procedures for the interpretation of the score significance involves integrating various data sources that can be meaningful in the act of counselling and outlining a reliable occupational profile:

- the behaviour of the client while delivering the answers;
- answer patterns (characteristic of the forced answers to the items of COII);
- verbal comments of the client regarding the inventory (understanding the instructions without any difficulty);
- the results obtained in the inventory and
- additional data obtained from other sources (CV, letter of intention, diplomas).

Target population

The instrument aims to be an inventory of the occupational preferences / interests of the students in high school, college students and adults (irrespective of the gender).

Examples, case studies, exercises

In administering this inventory one must consider the following possible situations:

- failure to provide an answer to certain items (if there are more than five such situations in total, the results become invalid); these omissions may become the object of supplementary interpretation: Are they accidental? Do they occur only for some scales, sectors or categories? What other instrument could be used to eliminate such occurrences?;
- random marking of answers to the items in the inventory (as a consequence of boredom, tiredness, misunderstanding the answer method, lack of consideration for the questionnaire); these cases must be discussed with the client and explanations must be found, then the adequate steps must be taken: more motivation, alternative investigation instruments, etc.;
- offering answers to both bi-polar situations, instead of only choosing one; the situation can occur in case of fatigue, negligence or inattention, but also when the clients equally prefers both situations;
- frequent corrections of the answers given, as an effect of the personal difficulty to making a choice, misunderstanding the instructions or rush in decisions; more than five errors may lead to an uncertain profile, which will generate interpretation difficulties and – above all – the impossibility for the client to choose between the occupational alternatives offered by the counsellor.

It must be brought to attention that a congruent profile of interests – obtained from the COII – involves on the one hand a relationship between the scales:

Things (1) – Scientific (7) – Routine (3) – Solitary (9) – Production (0) and, on the other hand, a connection between the scales:

People (6) – Business contacts (2) – Social (4) – Prestige (5).

Nevertheless, one should not necessarily interpret as “incongruent” the profiles of interests that do not follow the patterns. First of all an explanation will be sought from a discussion with the client, discussion which will be focused on the client’s aspirations, projects, inspirations, etc. It happens on occasion that an answer varies with the capacity of the client to understand the tasks required during the completion of the inventory, the extent to which the client understands the language of the inventory, the client’s motivation and participation, the accuracy and completeness of the instructions given by the counsellor, the counsellor’s competence in scoring and confronting with standards and scales, etc.

Here are some additional recommendations for the counsellors on how to handle clients after the administration of the general aptitude tests:

- the strength, stability and direction of the systems of interests tell more about a person than the absolute level of performance;
- focusing on the client's aptitude performance is recommended in case the counsellor lacks basic information on the world of work, or the client's system of interests is not yet clarified on account of youth;
- in case both components (the interests and the aptitudes) are irrelevant for interpretation and counselling, the stress must fall on the interview as additional source of information;
- in any case the clients should be invited to express their point of view regarding the psychological evaluation, the results obtained and the interpretation offered by the counsellor;
- outlining a plan of action for the development of the client's career – as a consequence of the psychological evaluation and the interview – is a concluding stage, which is of great importance to the client (according to the meaning of the interpretation offered by the counsellor: descriptive, predictive or evaluative);
- the maximum impact of the psychological interpretation is ensured in case the client is open and motivated to accept the “scenario” devised by the counsellor.

Method evaluation

The inventory was developed in Canada. The pre-test versions were both in English and in French. During the administration it was found that some items needed changing and thus in 1974 the final version was created.

The reliability coefficient obtained through the test-retest method was between 0.80 and 0.90. Variables such as the language or the age of the target population do not seem to significantly influence the profile.

The validity coefficient quota (construct and criterion validity) also places this inventory among the most valuable, which generates profiles comparable to those obtained through other well-known instruments (e.g. Kuder, Holland).

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Strong Interest Inventory

(*SII*)

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History

E. K. Strong was one of the pioneers with measurement of vocational interests. Ever since the 1920s, the author and his collaborators noticed that people belonging to different professional groups are systematically different (apart from the system of aptitudes, skills and knowledge) in their likes and dislikes (and not just vocational, but also regarding their hobbies, entertainment, reading, etc., that is situations which are apparently not connected to their workplace). This remark suggests that **the profession is a lifestyle and not just a means of earning a living**. The psychological implication is that is we could have an overall picture of the lifestyle an individual prefers (that is his or her system of interests) and the counsellor could recommend the suitable profession even before the client entering the working life.

The instrument drawn up as a result is *Strong Vocational Interest Bank (SVIB)* and, subsequently (1974), when the same test developed versions for men and women, its name was changed into *Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory – SCII*; this version has not undergone much change. At present, Campbell is no longer involved in the making of the instrument, so that now it is called ***Strong Interest Inventory – SII***. Revisions have been operated by Hansen and Campbell (1985), Borgen (1988), and Hansen (1992).

Only a few items were replaced from the initial version, those related to the religious activities, so that the 325 items in the 1985 edition are unchanged.

Theoretical background

Strong studied answers to questionnaires of interests given by “people-in-general”, comparing them against answers given by people belonging to various professional groups, thus identifying the specificity of the system of interests of the persons exerting certain professions. Statistically significant items could be delimited regarding the system of interests for certain occupational groups (in the beginning there were 70, then 124). Further research has extended over the relationship between the score of occupational interests and age, special aptitudes or other important human characteristics.

Below is an example to be answered with I like, I dislike, I neither like nor dislike:

	I like	I neither like nor dislike	I dislike
I like being an actor			
I like botanical science			
I like writing reports			
Etc.			

SII is mainly used as a means of supporting clients in their decision-making concerning long-term career planning, studies, future occupation or profession, in sum it is for “anyone in need of help with their career or in making a decision regarding their lifestyle” (Hansen, 1992).

This inventory supports clients already employed with the process of understanding professional dissatisfaction, offers by means of counselling some solutions regarding the personal lifestyle and career development throughout life.

The genesis of this instrument is based on experimental research of the professional insertion and satisfaction at the workplace of various categories of population, case studies and occupational statistical analyses.

Method presentation

Strong inventory of interests comprises:

- six general occupational themes (using Holland codes for profiles of “occupational personality”) and
- 23 scales of basic interests.

Starting here, scales are derived for 207 occupations (of which, 202 are scales gender non-specific, 4 scales for female subjects, and a scale for male subjects).

About a third of the occupational profiles involve intermediary levels of education.

There are two special scales, as well as 26 administrative indexes.

The sections of the inventory are:

- occupations;
- school subjects;
- activities;
- leisure activities;
- types of persons;
- preference between activities;
- individual characteristics.

Performance is expressed as a standard score.

Total administration time: 25-35 minutes.

Applying the inventory to a group of individuals irrespective of gender, with various occupations, variable levels of education and training, practicing a profession since at least three years, successful and satisfied with their work, compile the standards and with the tasks they are expected to carry out.

The format of the inventory is paper-pencil or electronic.

The computerized version of the inventory contains the SII, instructions for (self) administration, soft for internal scoring, and result interpretation.

Comparative studies regarding the equal value of the results obtained by employing the paper-pencil format and the electronic one; the computerized version has been proved to yield more reliable occupational profiles (both by test-retest, and comparison against the Holland codes). In addition, the computerized version is faster to administrate (an average of 22 minutes), compared to the paper-pencil (in average 31 minutes). A statistical comparison (the median and the standard deviation) of the two formats exhibits a negligible difference.

Target population

Strong inventory of interests is addressed to high school and college students, as well as to adults (including those who wish to plan for retirement).

Examples, case studies, exercises

Two manuals offer clients a means of interpreting their scores and occupational codes:

- *The Career Development Guide for Use with the Strong* (1987).
- *Introduction to the Strong for Career Counselors* (1991).

At the same time, the following instruments are necessary:

- *The Strong Career Finder Exploration Worksheet* (1991) to support clients in their search for a job.
- *The Strong Career Finder* (1991) offering additional lists of occupations.

For counsellors, a correct administration of the SII and interpretation of the results translates in complying with the *Manual* and *User's Guide*; the most recent editions are 1985, respectively 1992.

The predictive value of the inventory is high, in the sense that 15 of 20 clients have found an occupation matching the profiles obtained in previous SII tests.

Method evaluation

Strong inventory is one of the most convincing instruments in the field. Nevertheless, Japsen (1991) recommends this inventory mostly for clients who:

- have a high level of education;
- have no emotional problems;
- have a rich life experience allowing them to give justified answers to items;
- are determined in their feelings;
- are accustomed to give yes-no answers;
- accept the “general” interpretations and predictions and not necessarily the specific or concrete ones.

If these conditions are not fulfilled, there is the risk that the results obtained through evaluation with this instrument are not accepted or considered useful in career planning.

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Jackson Vocational Interest Survey

(JVIS)

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History

JVIS was created by the American clinician psychologist Douglas N. Jackson (1929-2004). The instrument (published in 1977) is used both for facilitating the decisions regarding the choice of education and training pathways, as well as in order to support the more general process of career planning.

Investigating the vocational interests proves a logical step in the succession of stages and decisions leading to the choice of a career that once practiced should reward the individual personally and professionally satisfaction (provided the systems of aptitudes, skills, motivations and personality traits be consistent and the opportunities seized).

From the same author: *Personality Research Form* (PRF), *Employee Screening Questionnaire* (ESQ), *Leadership Skills Profile* (LSP).

Theoretical background

Jackson has an original idea with regard to the process of measuring the interests for supporting the decision-making in education and work. Accordingly, he brings innovations consisting in:

- re-conceptualisation of preferences or affinities both in terms of **work-specific roles** (seen as sets of relatively homogeneous activities relevant for an occupation), and **work styles** (preferences for certain work environments);
- using highly elaborate statistical strategies to draw up the scales of the questionnaire;
- giving equal importance to males and females systems of interests;
- designing a transparent scoring procedure allowing re-checking the profiles.

Method presentation

The main purpose of the questionnaire of interests is “de scos spatial de dupa ghili *supporting pupils, students and adults in the process of planning their education and training*” (Jackson, 1977).

JVIS offers the possibility to identify relevant information for the client – in the sphere of interests – that should allow making a customized plan for education and training, as well as facilitate realistic decision-making concerning the career development.

Scales and profiles JVIS operates with:

- 34 Basic Interests Scales (BI)
- 10 General Occupational Themes (GOT)
- Administrative Indices (AI)
- Similarity with the main university profiles (17 broad groups)
- Similarity with the main occupational clusters (32)

The measurement of clients’ system of interests involves forced choices (method which eliminates the answers influenced by each other and by desirable social stereotypes), according to personal preferences (activity liked better, or least disliked) to each pair of statements about activities or situations connected to work. There are 289 such pairs of statements (relatively independent and sometimes referring to very dissimilar situations) – 578 items in total. Selecting the most relevant items for this questionnaire required successive selections from over 3000 items.

Clients are requested from the start to only have in mind their interests and preferences, ignoring other experiences that they might have had with jobs or training.

Of the **34 scales of Basic Interests**, 8 refer to the preference of **work style**, and 26 are focused on the interests in **work-specific roles**.

The scales referring to the work style target “the *preference for working in a certain environment or in a situation where a certain behaviour type is the norm*” (Jackson, 1977); for instance, Dominant leader, Independence, Work safety.

The scales associated to **work-specific roles** refer to the preference for activities associated to various occupation groups (e.g. Creative Arts, Performing Arts, Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Life Science, Social Sciences. Each scale is relatively independent from the rest).

Below is the author’s description of the **34 Basic Interests Scales**:

Scale	Description
Creative Arts	Interest in arranging materials in a manner pleasing to the eye; pleasure in being creative and original in the field of arts and applied arts (e.g. music, drawing or decorating).
Performing Arts	Pleasure to perform in front of an audience.
Mathematics	Pleasure of operating with mathematical formula and quantitative concepts; interest in calculus and in planning and applying mathematical methods to problem solving.
Physical Sciences	Interest in systematically investigating the various aspects of the non-living universe (e.g. chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy).
Engineering	Interest in designing, testing or producing a large variety of products and applying scientific principles to solving practical problems.
Life Science	Interest in investigating the various aspects of the living organisms.
Social Science	Interest in investigating and learning the various aspects of society, human behaviour and social interaction.
Adventure	Joy of experiencing novel situations, seeking the unknown or danger.
Nature – Agriculture	The pleasure to work outdoors or with animals and plants.
Skilled Trades	Preference for manual work and machines, usually building or repairing things.
Personal Service	Pleasure of rendering services to people (e.g. tourist guide or beautician).
Family Activity	Taking pleasure in household activities, such as active involvement in family life and raising children, decorating and taking care of the house and garden, or related activities.
Medical Service	Interest in promoting health and caring for the sick.
Dominant Leadership	Preference for forceful leadership. Taking pleasure in being in charge, supervising and criticising the work of others.
Job Security	Preference for well-defined and predictable work. Avoiding social and economic risks.
Stamina	Wish to work on a certain task without interruption until completion. Perseverance, commitment and obstinacy in the face of difficulty. Self-assumed involvement in the task.

Accountability	Preference to work in an environment that requires a high level of integrity and traditional virtues.
Teaching	Interest in teaching school subject matters.
Social Service	Interests in helping people face their problems.
Elementary Education	Taking pleasure in teaching and nurturing children.
Finance	Interest in satisfying the financial needs of the public, solving their investment and economic issues.
Business	Interest in the day-to-day functioning of business and commerce
Office Work	Interest in office work and activities which require attention to detail, usually in the context of business.
Sales	Interest in sales, influencing, persuading people and working with them.
Supervising	Interest in planning, organizing and coordinating the activity of others. Taking pleasure in exercising responsibility.
Human Relations Management	Taking pleasure in acting as a mediator in a conflict, solving interpersonal situations, including the difficult and the emotional ones.
Law	Interest in law.
Professional Advising	Joy of counselling and giving specialized advice.
Author – Journalism	Taking pleasure in creative and original writing, writing for a large audience.
Academic Achievement	Interest in the field of academic acquisitions, particularly oral. Systematic study skills are required.
Technical Writing	Pleasure of writing in detail factual reports, textbooks, scientific, legal, historical or technical essays.
Independence	Preference for an environment lacking restrictions and strict supervision. Need of being free from rules; desire to find solutions to problems on one's own, instead of seeking help from others.
Planfulness	Preference for certain work routine and an environment where the activities must be fulfilled in foreseeable sequences.
Interpersonal Confidence	Preference for a work environment requiring a high level of self-confidence in interacting with others. This involves no fear of strangers and speaking with conviction about various topics. Confidence in the own ability to fulfil most of the interpersonal tasks that one is engaged in.

The 34 Basic Interest Scales can be further grouped into 11 – separated in the table above by thickened lines – depending on certain similar characteristics.

The **10 General Occupational Themes** are patterns of interest reflecting the dominant guidance rather than the preferences for activities in a certain field (e.g. Expressive, Logical, Practical, Assertive, etc.). The scores obtained in the 10 General Occupational Themes are expressed in percentages compared to the reference lots, per gender.

Below is the author's description of the **10 General Occupational Themes**:

Theme	Description
Expressive	A high score reflects an orientation towards arts, even though at present the person is not directly involved in any artistic activity. Creative activities, such as theatre, music, writing, visual arts or applied arts are preferred, in addition to carrying out creative activities in a group. High scores tend to describe a person who is receptive, inventive, sensitive, imaginative and aware of the surrounding environment. Artists obtain high scores here, but many other persons combine the characteristics of this theme with others, in order to better communicate their interest.
Logical	A high score reflects a preference for abstract thinking characterized by verifiable generalizations, deductive reasoning, and precision. Such persons like the challenge of difficult intellectual work, especially mathematics and physical sciences and applications of technological engineering, computers and others where intense and exact labour is required. People who score high here prefer the work of concrete and abstract ideas to working with people.
Inquiring	A high score is indicative of an excessive curiosity about the environment, the living, other persons or social institutions. There is a great desire to learn about many fields of knowledge and the person can be described as investigative, intellectual and enjoying reflection. When it comes to choosing a career in the field of social sciences or biology, one opts for one in the field or combinations of this theme with others.
Practical	A high score reflects an inclination towards activities which require physical or mechanic abilities, and satisfaction is derived from the quality of one's work rather than by exerting influence over others. Such people prefer working outdoors and are not concerned with physical risks; tend to reject activities demanding attention and prefer practical activities to abstract ideas. They enjoy close family relationships and like to contribute to the comfort and good living of others. High scores are obtained in a large variety of activities such as: agriculture, manual work, and services.
Assertive	A high score is indicative of a preference for situations where one can prove to be in control and authority is clearly defined. Such persons enjoy exerting authority over others, have great self-confidence and do not need to ask for advice or assistance. High scores can sometimes be seen as a way of communicating sincerely and directly with others, pleasure of group work, especially from a dominant position. People working in the military especially, where this style of leadership is adequate, obtain high scores with this theme.
Socialized	High scores show that the person is seen as a worker: stable, disciplined, responsible, prompt, systematic and cautious, however less creative. Such a person usually wishes to be guaranteed a certain income and a predictable future rather than accepting risks by involvement in a less certain though more lucrative project. Stable activities that reward the traditional virtues will be favoured.
Helping	A high score expresses a natural concern with others, especially people in trouble requiring assistance. These high scores show pleasure in social

	interaction and helping, and such a person can be described as well-meaning, comforting, understanding, charitable, supportive and cooperative. People who score high here must have in mind occupations where they can be directly involved in helping, serving or teaching others.
Conventional	A high score reflects a preference for a well-determined role in the field of business or in large organizations. Such persons will enjoy day-to-day business activities, e.g. working in an office, sales, making decisions or supervising others. Preference will be shown for working in a calm organization to one full of variables and overloaded with new tasks; such persons will prosper in exact works, and will prefer not to have to be highly creative, nor to fulfil tasks which involve mechanical skills, discomfort or physical risks.
Enterprising	A high score reflects a preference for activities involving conversation, in order to influence or persuade. Such persons are highly self-confident, rarely in difficulty, dominant and strong; are as a rule more interested in marketing or management, in the details of the daily operations or particular aspects. They are motivated by the conventional symbols of social status (money, influence, and prestige), rather than by other forms of recognition. Besides business, high scores may also be registered in legal activities, administration, public relations, diplomacy and related.
Communicative	A high score reflects an interest in ideas and their communication. Such persons enjoy the formal expressions of thinking (reading, attending conferences, study or intellectual exchanges). They will take pleasure in phrasing and expressing concepts rather than in simply exchanging words with others. High scores describe an intellectual person, well connected to reality, well informed, with a large range of interests. Professional writers score high here. However, since communication is important in many occupations, many other scores will be high elsewhere.

Higher or lower scores actually represent the frequency of choosing answers to certain statements in the sphere of professional interests.

The answer sheet – for the Basic Interests Scales – is available in two formats, depending on whether the scoring is manual or computer-assisted.

The Administrative Indices contains scores which show the degree of confidence that can be placed on the results obtained; the scales are useful in the process of interpretation the clients' profile, by signalling the situations where there is doubt or certainty. These scales are: *Unscorable Responses*, *Response Consistency Index*, *Infrequency Index* and their values must be within certain limits (patterns) considered normal.

The score for **Academic Satisfaction** (AS) reflects the level of similarity between one's personal profile and the average in universities, with students involved in traditional and/or scientific academic courses, studies or activities. The AS score is not a measure of the person's ability for higher education, neither can it foresee the success in the field. Instead, this score can offer a clue to the enjoyment of academic activities, study, reading, research and other intellectual tasks.

The average score is 500. Some two thirds of high school and university students obtain scores between 400 and 600.

Similarity to College Students

The JVIS profile is compiled based on investigating over 10000 students, enrolled in more than 150 university fields. This has made necessary that the fields be classified in 17 large academic groups. Each group was formed based on similar patterns of interests obtained from JVIS scores both by men and women.

The report presented to the client in this chapter will contain a three-column table:

- score (sub-unitary, positive and negative values);
- similarity (degree of resemblance between the client's interest pattern and certain university fields which vary on the following scale: very similar, similar, moderately similar, neutral, different);
- 17 major academic groups:
 - agribusiness and economics
 - art and architecture
 - behavioural science
 - business
 - communication arts
 - computer science
 - education
 - engineering
 - environmental resource management
 - food sciences
 - health services and science
 - health, physical education and recreation
 - mathematical sciences
 - performing arts
 - science
 - social science, justice and politics
 - social service

Similarity to Job Groups

The results obtained by the client in this questionnaire of Basic Interest are compared against the structures of interests of people employed in 32 large groups of occupations.

Just like in the previous situation (Similarity to College Students), a high positive score is indicative of the fact that the client's profile is similar (or different) in various degrees (very similar, similar, moderately similar, neutral, different) to that of people already employed in certain vocational clusters.

The 32 job groups:

- accounting, banking and finance
- administrative and related occupations
- agriculturalists
- assembly occupations – instruments and small products
- clerical services
- commercial art
- computer science
- construction / skilled trades
- counsellors / student personnel workers
- engineering and technical support workers
- entertainment
- fine arts
- health service workers
- law and politics
- life sciences
- machining / mechanical and related occupations
- mathematics and related occupations
- medical diagnosis and treatment occupations
- merchandising
- music
- personnel / human management
- physical sciences
- pre-school and elementary teaching

- protective services occupations
- religion
- sales occupations
- services occupations
- social sciences
- social welfare
- sport and recreation occupations
- teaching and related occupations
- writing

Interpreting the clients' profile may take place at three levels:

- individual analysis of the high and low scores;
- considering the entire configuration of the scores for the Basic Interests Scales in relation to the broad occupational groups and concrete occupations, jobs and professions;
- integrating the two above levels with all additional information on the client to offer highly individualized counselling.

The results obtained in completing the questionnaire allow scores expressed in percentiles (high, medium, low), standard scores, quotas of correspondence and ranks.

As mentioned, the correspondence scores compare the Basic Interests profile with other two group criteria:

- 17 fields of academic education and
- 32 vocational clusters (with 189 subcategories for male patterns of interest and 89 for female).

The first three positions – with the highest degree of correspondence – are described and presented in detail. The hierarchy obtained by this means of comparison is not an evaluation of aptitudes and abilities of the client for these fields, but only a reflection of the client's interests.

The comparison is useful in choosing the initial training and continuing, as well as in planning one's personal career.

Using the Dictionary of Occupational Titles – DOT (similar to the Classification of Occupations in Romania – COR) – one can identify precise names for occupations, professions and jobs that should match pretty well the client's pattern of interests very well.

In the end, the JVIS report for clients (*Career Exploration Guide*):

- recommends the steps to be taken after the questionnaire completion;
- provides short descriptions of occupations in correspondence with their own structure of interests;
- signals additional self-information sources;
- suggests a strategy for self-knowledge, decision-making and career planning.

Clients can opt for a more condensed form of the profile or a more detailed report (*JVIS Extended Report*), which should include their profile of interests (scales BI), the list of scores for the general occupational themes (GOT), correspondence with certain types of educational and training pathways, correspondence with certain occupational clusters, scales of academic satisfaction, as well as a list of additional information sources focused on the aspects specific to the results obtained. The administration index is destined for use only by the counsellor in the interpretation of profiles.

There is the possibility – for a fee – to administrate online the standard version of the questionnaire; in this case, the report is generated on the spot.

The complete form of the questionnaire includes: Instruction manual for completion of the questionnaire, Answer sheets (that can be scanned for computerized scoring), Brochure (reusable) with the questionnaire, Answers necessary for manual scoring, Sheets for compiling the profile, etc. It takes approximately 45-60 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The results can be registered manually (in 10-15 minutes, only for BI scales) or automatically (electronically) by scanning the answer sheets. The interpretation of the questionnaire can have variable durations, according to the type of report offered to the client (short, detailed, accompanied or not by explanations).

The questionnaire must be administrated by career counsellors, school counsellors, psychologists, specialists in psycho-diagnosis, people trained in the field. The latest revision of the scale was done in 1990, and the most recent edition of the Manual and Guide was released in 1977.

Target population

The categories of persons targeted by this method of investigation are: high school students, vocational school students, post-high school students, undergraduates and adults.

JVIS is meant to identify the interests and offer an image of the various academic and occupational roles the subjects might undertake in the future. The full picture of the

client's profile requires, aside from the profile of interests, the evaluation of the system of aptitudes, skills, abilities and knowledge (obtained by other specific tests). At the same time, this instrument may be useful to parents or teachers motivated to support their children or pupils in self-assessment, information, academic and vocational decision-making (see the websites at the end of the bibliography for this article), adults seeking for a job or intending to change jobs.

Method evaluation

The verification of reliability was performed by: test-retest (quotas of over 0.80), estimate of internal consistency, evaluation of profile stability by inter-correlation of two profiles at certain time intervals, etc. This exercise has shown the high quality of this instrument in the field of evaluating professional interests.

Construct validity and concurrent validity (by comparison to *SVIB Basic Interest Scales*) are also high.

Advantages:

- the questionnaire is well grounded statistically, on the whole;
- manual and electronic scoring;
- easy interpretation of the contents of scales on various roles related to work, due to their detailed narrative description;
- scales allowing numeric comparison and graphs within various occupational groups and academic fields;
- an instrument open to various types of use (guidance in education, work, offering Holland scores, etc.);
- international recognition (facilitating comparative studies);
- relatively short interval for completion (approximately 50 minutes);
- different scales for men and women subjects;
- immediate personalized report, including supporting elements for decision-making;
- the completion may be performed in stages, that is the process can be taken up if an interruption should occur.

Disadvantages:

- relatively fragile theoretical grounding of the scales (BI, themes and occupational groups);
- difficult interpretation of the contents of the pair of items in the questionnaire;
- relatively low longitudinal / temporal predictability of the profiles obtained;
- insufficient description of the reference groups on the basis of which the final form of the questionnaire was drawn up;
- relatively long interval needed for interpretation of results.

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Cognitive Information Processing

(CIP)

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History

In their work, *Career Development and Services. A Cognitive Approach*, Peterson, Sampson and Reardon (1991) present a new approach to career development, which they called “*Cognitive Information Processing – CIP*”.

Cognitive theories, based on learning theories, refer to methods through which people – by their knowledge structures – process, integrate and react to information.

People’s cognitive structures make a mark on the particular way they develop an image of the world, self, and the environment they live in. Career-centred behaviour is a reaction to cognitive representations of the set of factors involved in career development. These representations are related functionally and can be changed according to the way human learning and cognitive development occurs. Self-assessment, knowledge related to professions and the social and professional environment interact and at the same time modify and mediate career-oriented behaviours.

Counsellors have remarked during interviews certain dysfunctions in the thinking of clients related to choosing an occupation, and have interpreted them as being: misconceptions, avoidance behaviour, self-discouraging or self-destructive hypotheses and statements; irrational expectations, distorted representations or dysfunctional beliefs regarding their professional future. These factors represent genuine obstacles in the path of problem solving and decision-making with respect to career choice, alongside opposite situations: exaggerating one’s self-image: perfectionism, excessive generalization of personal experiences, etc.

Theoretical background

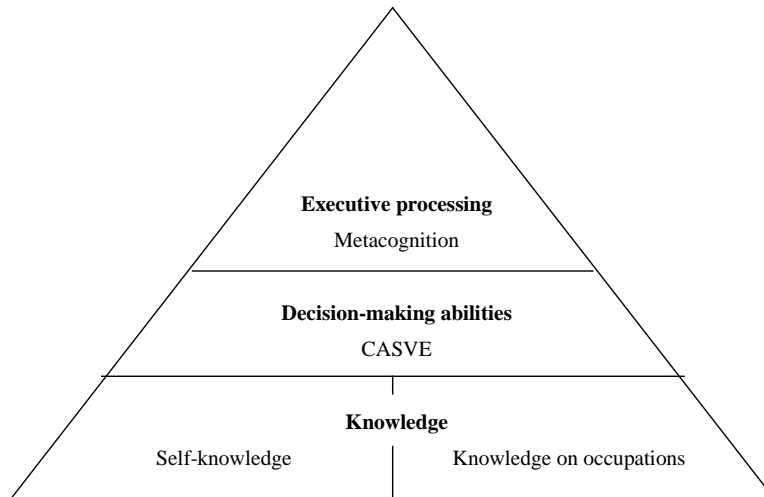
Cognitive information processing from the point of view of career development starts from the following fundamental premises (cf. Peterson, Sampson and Reardon, 1991):

Premises	Explanations
1. Career choice is the result of the interaction between the cognitive and the affective processes	CIP stresses the cognitive domain in career-oriented decision-making, but also takes into account the role of the emotional component as information source in the process. To sum up, engaging in career-oriented actions involves the interaction of affective and cognitive processes.
2. Career choice is an activity of “problem solving” type	People learn solve problems related to their career (choosing an occupation) in the same way they solve other matters. The essential difference between the two situations is the complexity and ambiguity of stimuli and the high level of incertitude with respect to the solutions found.
3. One’s problem solving ability depends on how operational his/her cognitive functions are, as well as the information one has	The ability to solve problems related to career is linked to the process of self-knowledge and to the information one holds on occupations, also to the results of cognitive operations that connect the respective fields.
4. Career-oriented problem solving is a task making recourse to memory functions	The fields of self-knowledge and the world of work are highly complex. Their adjoining requires deeply use of one’s memory.
5. Motivation	Motivation to better solve career-related problems builds on the desire to make satisfactory choices, starting from the understanding of self and of the world of occupations.
6. Career development involves repeated increase and changes in knowledge structures	Self-knowledge and information on occupations consist in sets of organized memory structures, which are operations throughout one’s lifetime. Since the world of occupations and people themselves are continually changing, permanent adjustments of these structures are necessary.
7. Career identity is dependent on self-knowledge	Career identity depends on the complexity, the integration mechanisms, and the stability of the structure making up the domain of self-knowledge.
8. Maturity to choose a career depends on the ability to solve problems	The maturity to choose a career is defined as the ability to make decisions independently and responsibly on the basis of correlating the available information about self and the world of occupations.
9. The purpose of career counselling is attained through facilitating the development of information processing	The purpose of career counselling is to create those conditions of learning to facilitate the development of memory structures, and cognitive abilities that can raise the client’s capacity to process information.
10. The objective of career counselling is increasing career-related problem solving and decision-making abilities	The objective of career counselling is increasing the client’s ability of making career-related decisions by developing information the processing abilities.

According to the authors, we understand a *problem* to mean: “indecision, conflict between potential options and different significant interests, non-constructive associated emotions, underemployment, unemployment, dissatisfaction at the workplace” (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, Saunders, 1996). *Problem solving* means transforming information in action meant to lead to the decrease or disappearance of the gap between “what there is and what we wish there to be”. *Decision-making* includes problem solving and cognitive and affective processes, which will support planning and implementing the solutions to problems that have been identified.

In the same context, the *cognition* signifies the way in which thinking processes information (data internalisation, coding, storing, concepts and experience usage). Each person operates with certain knowledge structures or components, which remain functional due to the long-term memory, essential to career-related decisions. In case of making decisions regarding personal career development, the data an individual has about self, occupations, and the world of work in general are analysed.

According to Peterson, Sampson, Reardon (1991) the components making up the career-related decision-making mechanism takes the hierarchical form of a pyramid (on three levels):



- the base contains *the domains of knowledge*: about self – **self-knowledge** (values, interests, aptitudes) and about **the world of occupations** (education and training pathways, data on occupations, trades, professions, jobs); these categories of information are stored in memory by the dynamic structure and are reconfigured whenever new information is added;

- the middle level includes *the domains of problem solving and decision-making oriented information processing*: in five steps – the **CASVE** cycle – leading to the right career choice:
 - **Communication** (*Understanding the need to make a choice*. People become aware of the existence of problems regarding the data / information they hold and they might need in order to exchange their situation for a desired one. The external environment may be favourable or unfavourable. Possible reactions: nervousness, frustration, discouragement or pro-activeness oriented towards questioning others, self-information, contacting specialized institutions, learning and practicing communication).
 - **Analysis** (*Understanding one's self and the available options*. People analyse the general frame and the components of the problem that needs solving and draw up a mental action plan. This stage requires a deep understanding of self (values, aptitudes, interests), interpreting the data of the personal problem, self-observation, gathering new information, reflection and understanding the relationship between self and the chosen occupations).
 - **Synthesis** (*Extending and limiting the list of targeted occupations*. The purpose of this process is to elaborate realistic alternative solutions (by divergent thinking), on the basis of the information held. Of the many apparently acceptable temporary solutions, those farthest removed from one's personal interests, values and aptitudes are gradually eliminated, so that in the end a shortlist of occupations assessed as most acceptable (three to five plausible options) should be made up by means of convergent thinking. The final choice will contain a compromise between the maximum level of advantages and the minimum level of disadvantages, since any choice implicitly involves some renunciation).
 - **Value** (*Choosing education, training and specialization, occupation or job*. In this stage there is a hierarchy of alternatives with respect to the ratio cost / benefit – for self and others: family, colleagues, social and cultural group – but also as regards fulfilling an ideal or personal development model. Of the many alternatives considered the most convenient is selected, possibly the second or third on the list if the first is unattainable; there is a strong positive emotional component sustaining this process of implementing the option).
 - **Execution** (*Implementing the personal choice*. In this stage career development thoughts are converted into action on the basis of a plan that takes into account the necessary steps to be taken and the means and strategies that should be applied for its realization. The plan must also include preparatory programmes of additional

training, trial, part-time or full-time employment, etc. The stage consists of applying decisions and solving problems identified in the first stage. Its duration may vary from a short time period in case of adults looking for a job, to longer periods in case of young people preparing for their first job).

The CASVE cycle is repeated in case of either failure to enter the social and professional life, insurmountable difficulties at the workplace, or erroneous evaluation of personal investments (time, finance, emotions, etc.) in the attainment of the goals in the career development plan.

- at the top there is *the domain of executive processing, carrying out one's decision*: the stage of reflecting on career-related decisions, which involves **meta-cognitive** abilities; this mechanism holds an evaluation and a control function over the way the decision has been made (on the preceding level of the pyramid), as well as over its accuracy with respect to personal values, interests and aptitudes, but also to information on occupations (basic level of the pyramid).

Three abilities are of paramount importance in the meta-cognitive process: inner voice, self-consciousness, control and monitoring.

Inner voice is the ability to (re) strengthen one's self-image through a dialogue with the self, as regards self-knowledge, decision-making, relationships with others, etc.

Self consciousness, in this case, refers to the awareness of one's emotions, ability to put decisions into practice, taking into account one's own interests, but also those of others.

Control and monitoring is the necessary self-control in the process of implementing personal decisions: establishing the time for action, possible postponement of the implementation, anticipating and surmounting difficulties and the implementation itself.

Brown (1978) identifies the following meta-cognitive abilities involved in career decision-making: *knowing one's personal limits, becoming aware of one's own decision-making strategy, identifying the problems that need solving, elaborating planning and programming strategies, continual monitoring, understanding when the problem is solved, avoiding conflicts with the self.*

The process of developing meta-cognitive abilities involves: identification of negative thoughts about the personal ability to make decisions, positive inner voices, eradicating ideas of the type *all or nothing*, developing self-control, increasing one's problem-solving ability, etc.

In the vision of CIP, career-related problem solving includes common traits such as:

- problems can be defined in terms of the distance between what it is and what is desired, that is reality and aspirations;
- career-related problems are complex and involve numerous emotional aspects, which put some pressure on the person, alongside with the influence of family, society, economic and cultural environment, etc.;
- career-related problem solving goes through the stage of multiple options, hesitations, oscillations between relatively equivalent alternatives;
- indecision around career-related choices is caused by the advantages and disadvantages that come with every option, therefore narrowing the range of alternatives is felt as a decrease in the freedom of choice, as choosing the “lesser evil”, and in the end the solution found – which is a combination of successive options – does not appear highly successful and satisfactory;
- a final decision regarding one’s career leads to another set of problems – unknown beforehand – and that will require further solving.

Method presentation

The CIP method applied to career counselling is one of continual learning, in the sense that the evaluation functions were integrated with the intervention functions in the very process of counselling; this model is also associated with the developments of cognitive theories (which state that the cognitive dysfunctions have a decisive impact on generating maladaptive behaviours and emotions). Processes put in place by the counsellor are of cognitive restructuring, cooperation, attention to emotions, etc., all oriented towards replacing cognitive dysfunctions and turning behaviours and emotions into positive and functional ones.

To sum up, this new approach starts from the following hypotheses:

- career choice is based on our way of thinking and feeling;
- making career-related choices is an activity of the problem solving type;
- problem solving abilities are based on the information one holds and how one operates with them;
- career-oriented decision-making is based on memory functions;
- career-related decisions involve motivation;

- career development is part of the continuing learning and growing;
- one's career essentially depends on how one envisages it;
- the qualitative side of one's career is decisively influenced by the way one learns the decision-making and problem-solving mechanisms.

The applied part of the CIP model refers to supporting clients in solving their career-related problems and decision-making.

Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) is an *evaluation* and *intervention* instrument used in counselling based on the theoretical development of “cognitive information processing” (CIP). “*Career thoughts*” means the result of mental activity including: behaviours, beliefs, feelings, plans and strategies oriented to solving problems and making decisions concerning one's career.

In this context, we consider that the notion of **career** must be understood as **a combination of multiple roles (child, student, parent, spouse, employee, citizen, retiree, etc.) performed – successively or simultaneously – throughout one's lifetime.**

The instrument aims to link the process of evaluation to the collection of measures clients may use in their own interest: information, training, decision-making, career development, etc. In other words, CTI is an instrument of evaluation and making one aware of his/her personal of making realistic career-related decisions and at the same time a source of learning.

Clients who have been identified with problems and personal dysfunctions in occupational decision-making will require increased and more specialized assistance from the counsellors, as well as individual involvement in a learning process centred on understanding the world of work, the realm of social relations, defining and solving personal career-related problems.

By career-related “*dysfunctional thoughts*” the authors understand the results of thinking expressed in hypotheses, suppositions, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, plans or strategies connected to career problem solving or decision-making that can perturb or block the personal development.

CTI can also identify the results of career-oriented educational programmes (formal or non-formal) and the impact of various types of information, counselling and guidance interventions.

The administration of the inventory (individual, including self-administration or in group) begins with filling out the client identification data: name, date of taking the test, age, gender, academic status, employment status, accomplished levels of formal education, etc.

“**Career Thoughts Inventory**” has 48 items, all formulated as negative statements, requiring an answer of the type:

1. **Strongly Disagree** (SD)
2. **Disagree** (D)
3. **Agree** (A)
4. **Strongly Agree** (SA)

Below, examples of items included in CTI:

No. of item	Examples of items	Evaluation			
1 ...	No field of study or occupation interests me	SD	D	A	SA
4 ...	I'll never understand myself well enough to make a good career choice	SD	D	A	SA
10 ...	There are few jobs that have real meaning for me	SD	D	A	SA
17 ...	My interests are always changing	SD	D	A	SA
30 ...	I can narrow down my occupational choices to a few, but I don't seem to be able to pick just one	SD	D	A	SA
39 ...	Finding a good job in my field is just a matter of luck	SD	D	A	SA
42 ...	I know very little about the world of work	SD	D	A	SA

The duration is 7-15 minutes (according to the work style and temperament of the client); less than 5 minutes or more than 30 minutes should draw the counsellor's attention on certain problems (lack of motivation, difficulty in reading and comprehending the text, a state of crisis, etc.).

Clients' answers to questions (written on carbon paper) are imprinted on the sheets underneath. Then the pages with the working text are removed and the answers counted (by the counsellor, client or an operator).

The leaflet with the CTI contains instructions on how to sum up the answers and the scales for compiling an individual profile.

If 5 or more items remain unanswered, the result is invalid.

Summing up the answers is done on each of the two pages (25+23 items); the total sum is noted down on the second page.

No answer is equal to 0 (like **SD** – strongly disagree).

Answers marked with **D** (disagree), **A** (agree), **SA** (strongly agree) – and marked with 1, 2, or 3 points – are summed up as such and the results are written in the lower case of the column (**Sum_D**, **Sum_A**, **Sum_{SA}**). They make **Total₁**.

The same procedure on the next page yields to: **Sum_D**, **Sum_A**, **Sum_{SA}** and **Total₂**.

CTI Total is obtained in a separate case by summing up **Total₁** and **Total₂**.

Scores for the construct scales. With certain items the answer case is shaded (dark grey). In the three columns (**DMC**, **CA**, **EC**) to the right of the answer case the numeric values of the answers are transcribed – above an already existing line.

These values of the answers brought on the first page in the area of construct scales (**DMC**, **CA**, **EC**) are summed up and the results written down in the lower case of the respective column (**DMC₁ sum**, **CA₁ sum**, **EC₁ sum**).

The same procedure on the next page yields: **DMC₂ sum**, **CA₂ sum**, **EC₂ sum**.

The total results for each of these construct scales are summed up in separate cases.

On administering CTI, we get a **CTI Total** (as a global indicator of dysfunctional thinking in career-oriented problem solving and decision-making), and other scores for **three construct scales**; here is what they mean:

- **Decision Making Confusion (DMC – 14 items)**: the scale reflects an inability to start and go through the process of choosing a career as a result of lack of emotional support and/or misunderstanding the decision-making process.
- **Commitment Anxiety (CA – 10 items)**: the scale reflects an inability to make a commitment for a certain career-related choice, accompanied by general anxiety regarding the implications of the decision-making, which only perpetuate indecision.
- **External Conflict (EC – 5 items)**: the scale reflects the inability to balance the importance of self-image with other significant external facts for one's personal career, which results in a permanent oscillation in decision-making.

These values are finally transferred to the grids for obtaining an individual profile (they are three – for adults, students, pupils) and situated on the final page of the CTI leaflet.

The darker (higher) the profile, the more serious the dysfunction.

Necessary time for scoring is 5-8 minutes.

Result interpretation targets the diminution of dysfunctional career-oriented thoughts through **cognitive restructuring**.

“Therapeutic” interventions (in group or individual) orientated towards cognitive restructuring have two basic components:

- evaluating older cognitions;
- proposing less destructive and dysfunctional versions of new “representations and beliefs”, at the same time checking them in real life and comparing them to the old ones.

In short, the interpretation of the inventory is based on CTI Total, the scores obtained in the construct scales, and certain individual items.

CTI Total includes the answers to all 48 items and it is a global indicator of dysfunctional career-oriented thinking, decision-making and problem solving.

A smaller CTI Total reflects a rather low level of problems in this area; a more analytic interpretation involves the analysis of answers to certain items.

A higher CTI Total indicates serious career-related problems (unclear image of one's personal career, low self-confidence, lack of interest, indecision, information gap, negative experiences, depression, irrational ideas on occupations, etc.) and which call for urgent and personalized intervention; total high scores render the construct scores increasingly distinct and significant.

CTI Total also offers the objective justification for starting a process of assistance / intervention based on:

- analysis (scores below 40);
- cognitive restructuring (scores of 40-50);
- cognitive restructuring, repetition and practice (scores of 51-60);
- cognitive restructuring, repetition and practice, progressive relaxation, thematically oriented imagery (scores over 60).

We wish to bring to attention the fact that construct scores refer to: decision making confusion – DMC; commitment anxiety – CA; external conflict – EC.

DMC gives clues with respect to a client's reduced capacity to start and finish the career-oriented decision-making process, for emotional reasons or unclear understanding of the meaning and utility of the information held.

CA highlights a client's inability to engage in a certain direction of career development, due to anxiety of making a wrong decision, hesitation in front of comparable alternatives, impossibility of compiling a "list of personal priorities", etc.

EC shows the oscillation between self-perception and the significant facts making up real life and career development, the other's image of the world of occupations, etc.

All the categories of construct scores are defining parts of the cognitive processes involved in career-oriented problem solving and decision-making.

Interpreting the answers to certain items (marked with SA – strongly agree) may prove productive (especially with a low total CTI), identifying thus certain special categories of career-related dysfunctional thinking.

In measuring thought dysfunctionalities, the authors (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, Saunders, 1996) build on the following hypotheses and theoretical grounds:

1. "Dysfunctional thinking in the realm of career-related problem solving cannot be directly measured, but accepting certain statements placed as items in a questionnaire can offer some image of this process.

2. Interventions of the counselling services aim to increase clients' abilities to solve problems and make decisions regarding their own career.
3. Dysfunctional thoughts drastically limit clients' capacity to learn how to solve problems and make decisions.
4. People who seek counselling may have certain dysfunctional thoughts which undermine their problem-solving and decision-making abilities.
5. The more serious the level of dysfunctional thoughts, the greater the obstacles in career-related problem-solving and decision-making; moreover, one dysfunctionality alone may have a negative impact on the whole process.
6. Both the decided and the undecided clients with certain dysfunctional thoughts will have difficulties in career-related problem-solving and decision-making, but the undecided will be consumed by it.
7. Career-related dysfunctional thoughts will affect the information processing pyramid by: limiting the quality, quantity and accuracy of self-knowledge; reducing the quantity of information about occupations; acquiring decision-making abilities.
8. Career-related dysfunctional thoughts will affect the CASVE cycle by: problem denial, discontinual and inadequate actions in decision-making.
9. Career-related dysfunctional thoughts may cause people to avoid these categories of problems or inadequately engage in solving them (anxiety, delay, addiction, random choices, repeated occupation change, reducing the exploration behaviour in the realm of occupations, deformed self-image, isolation, stereotypical reactions, lack of satisfaction and self-confidence).
10. Career-related dysfunctional thoughts represent the source of other negative thoughts about family, relationships with friends or generally social relationships.
11. Career-related dysfunctional thoughts induce negative thoughts about learning at home, in school, at the workplace or in other social contexts by an incomplete or mystified interpretation and information of the occupations data on occupations.
12. Career-related dysfunctional thoughts may be identified and modified in the process of problem-solving and decision-making.
13. The tendency to have sporadic negative thoughts about choosing a career is part of the process of cognitive learning; persisting in these negative thoughts is part of a rigid reaction structure which can be recognized through by learning about self.
14. People who have career-related dysfunctional thoughts may be involved in reducing and changing these thoughts through assisted learning and practicing problem-solving and decision-making."

CTI Handbook is an operational instrument meant to support the interpretation of the scores obtained in the inventory and to facilitate the realization of cognitive restructuring, action plan and learning necessary for career-related problem-solving and decision-making. The handbook comprises seven components: introduction, five sections containing information and/or exercises, and conclusions.

For our purpose, the five sections worth describing.

Section 1. Identifying your total amount of negative career thoughts: *CTI total score.* Clients will have to understand that the higher the value, the more they are in need of counselling.

Section 2. Identifying the nature of your negative career thoughts: *CTI scale scores.* Subjects of the inventory, by comparing the results to various scales, may become aware of the nature of negative career-related thoughts and monitor their dynamics. Clients are thus helped to develop through learning their capacity of self-control over their dysfunctional career-related thoughts. The process of learning may be facilitated through mental knowledge and reaction structures, by reducing the number of variables involved in decision-making.

Section 3. Challenging and altering your negative career thoughts and taking action. On reanalysing the answers to the items marked with SA and A (strongly agree and agree), clients are helped to become aware of the impact of their negative thoughts on career-related problem-solving and decision-making, then supported to initiate an *individual action plan* and cognitive restructuring, encouraged to develop exploratory behaviours regarding the obtaining and the management of information, and stimulated to get emotionally involved in their occupational motives and interests.

Section 4. Improving your ability to make good decisions. Clients are supported to develop current and potential decision-making abilities; they will learn more quickly in case they improve, become more adaptable and personally profitable, differentiating between *knowing* (based on the information processing pyramid) and *doing* (having the CASVE cycle in mind).

Section 5. Making good use of support from other people. Clients are supported to understand the way of getting help from other sources: counsellors, family, friends, etc., in order to be able to operate certain cognitive restructuring, explore the career domain or make choices; this way, users may become more active and use information more efficiently.

Target population

CTI targets pupils from high schools and vocational schools, students and adults (males and females). These clients may complete the inventory for the following reasons:

- pupils from high schools and vocational schools: deciding on further education and training, finding an occupation, looking for a job;
- students: deciding on a field of specialized study, choosing an occupation, finding a job;
- adults: changing occupations or jobs, finding employment, re-enter working life after an absence for study, raising children or other reasons, professional advancement.

Examples, case studies, exercises

The theoretical base of cognitive theory is that the affective life and the behaviour of people are strongly determined by the way their cognitive processes unfold. Past experiences have their share in these processes.

Cognition, in the context of career, operates on the basis of a “schema” built on experiences (good or bad, encouragingly or inhibitory, etc.). In concrete situations of action, the schema may prove to be functional or dysfunctional, and an individual may adopt a corrective attitude, flexible, or may remain under the hold of an inadequate and non-productive way of reacting, strengthening thus the dysfunctional schema of behaviour, which will take their toll on subsequent information processing and the unfolding of systematic thinking. Negative and dysfunctional thoughts may crystallize in autonomous reactions, accompanied by emotions and self-blocking attitudes.

As regards personal decisions in solving career-related problems, Beck et al. (apud Sampson, 1996) find the following categories of systematic errors:

- “some people reach certain conclusions in the absence of arguments or even in spite of existing evidence to the contrary (arbitrary inference);
- some people only accept that information which is in agreement with their initial experience and knowledge (selective abstraction);

- some people reach certain conclusions on the basis of a limited number of incidents and then apply them to many other situations with which they bear no connection (over-generalization);
- some people distort events and certain situations much below / above their real significance (minimization and maximization);
- some people relate certain events and situations to themselves with no argument or logic (personalization);
- some people place all their experience in opposite categories (dichotomist reasoning).”

All the situations mentioned above significantly perturb the thinking and install a “circle” in the process of analysing and solving current problems: dysfunctional thoughts do not support problem solving, and the inability to find solutions to problems strengthens dysfunctional thinking. The solution is breaking out of this circle through “**cognitive restructuring therapy**”, seen as an active process (accompanied by empathic warmth), directive (but non-possessive), based on confidentiality and trust, bounded in time and centred on mending the dysfunctional way of thinking. This cognitive restructuring process implies learning in a supportive environment, self-observation of the negative and automatic thinking, examination of personal thoughts in certain situations and confronting them with aspects of reality, positive implication of emotions in behavioural reconstruction (having as consequence self-strengthening and self-perpetuation).

The steps recommended by the authors to efficiently use CTI:

- initial interview with clients to obtain *information* on them and their context of life;
- preliminary evaluation to obtain *quantitative data* on the client’s problems;
- identifying problems and *analysing their causes* so as to start understanding the problems and the reasons behind them;
- formulating *objectives* to diminish the gap between reality and the client’s image of the reality;
- developing an *individual learning and action plan* by identifying sequences to follow, resources and activities to carry out;
- putting the plan into *practice* and supporting clients to carry out the tasks agreed;
- retrospective *analysis* of the situation, *generalization*, *conclusions*.

Method evaluation

CTI is a theory with a precise area of applicability in supporting career-related decision-making and which is based on evaluation and a series of resources for intervention. In this situation, CTI supports clients in making correct, realistic decisions, which should match their system of interests, values and attitudes, teaching them at the same time how to solve in future similar situations.

Career Thought Inventory is a highly reliable instrument, making valid measurements with respect to dysfunctional thinking concerning career-related problem solving and decision-making in case of pupils, students, and adults.

Advantages: Counselling based on evaluation with CTI of career-related dysfunctional thinking has in view both aspects related to cognition and emotional side of a client.

Broad accessibility of administration (including self-administration): minimum education level required to read, understand the text of the inventory, operate (self) scoring, and develop one's individual profile is of 6.4 school years.

Clients themselves may employ either in individual and group counselling or CTI in the individual career-related problem solving and decision-making process. At the same time, CTI may be used as a personal checking instrument of the career-oriented decisions, as a resource of learning, a means of outlining one's self-image, a way to start a therapeutic exchange, etc.

Disadvantages: CTI has a relatively low number of items, which somewhat limits its applicability in particular situations clients might find themselves in during career-related decision making.

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General Aptitude Tests Battery

(GATB)

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History

The general aptitude test battery was created in the United States in the 1940s and it is a reliable instrument with a good performance predictability regarding the future work activities that is latent professional aptitudes. Following a statistical analysis of the data obtained from over 100 tests targeting various occupational clusters, 11 paper-pencil and 4 machine-operated tests were selected for measuring best the ten aptitude-related factors significant in the development of any professional activity. These tests formed the first edition of **GATB** (*General Aptitudes Test Battery*), coded B-1001. Later, the contents of GATB were improved and the battery of tests named B-1002 got to measure nine general aptitudes through 12 tests: 8 paper-pencil and 4 machines-operated. This final form is currently in use.

Theoretical background

According to the authors, the word *ability* is defined as what a person knows or can effectively do. Abilities are considered to have two basic components: *acquisitions* (what a person has learned to do) and *aptitudes* (what a person has potential to do in the future). Certainly, it is difficult to make the distinction, since whatever has been gained

previously and the practical experience will altogether influence future acquisitions and performance (Bezanson, 1990).

These remarks are important on the one hand to understand the way the battery is constructed and the choice of tests composing it, as well as the tasks proposed.

On the other hand, in order to fulfil a task required by a certain item, combinations – to different extent – of several types of aptitudes (often specialized) are necessary. Research has confirmed that several factors (occasionally different) contribute to the successful manifestation of an aptitude. There are, of course, tasks only calling for a certain aptitude: for example, for calculus at least an average numerical aptitude. For this reason, the counsellors must take into account the job requirements (from the point of the abilities involved) and what a person can “cover” from this range of requirements.

GATB may highlight the range of general aptitudes that each individual has to a different extent and in combinations, often unique. The results obtained in the general aptitude measurement tests, in order to be of use to clients, must be “translated”, “decoded” into useful and relevant information so that they can choose a relevant occupation.

To sum up, by the use of GATB counsellors will be able to help clients with:

- self-knowledge in terms of strengths and weaknesses;
- identifying their position with respect to the others and the labour market;
- identifying their aptitude potential for certain job domains and the general or specific occupation clusters (for which they have resources, due to the transferable skills or ability to learn).

Method presentation

As mentioned above, GATB is a set of general aptitude tests aiming to support clients with vocational guidance, entering the labour market, starting successfully with the social and professional life.

Administration time for the 12 subtests (8 paper-pencil and 4 machine-operated) is 48 minutes on the average. Nevertheless, it has been found that occasionally the time can extend to 2 and a half hours, including demonstrations and practical tests; the test can however be divided into (three) stages, for example on different days: Test – Booklet 1, Test – Booklet 2, Machine-operated test.

The complete GATB is made of:

1. Materials required during testing:
 - Test – Booklet 1 (Forms A and B)
 - Test – Booklet 2 (Forms A and B)
 - Answer sheet for the sub-test no. 8
 - Answer sheet
 - Manual dexterity board
 - Finger dexterity board
2. Materials for administration and scoring:
 - Scoring plastic grid
 - Results sheet
 - Profile sheet
3. Manuals and interpretation aids
 - Manual – Section I – Administration and scoring
 - Manual – Section II – Norms. Occupational aptitudes patterns
 - Manual – Section III – Development
 - Manual – Section IV – Norms. Specific occupations
 - Interpretation aid charts
 - Indicator sheet
 - Self-assessment sheet

The 12 subtests in GATB are as follows:

1. **Name comparison.** Task duration: **6 minutes**

The test requires comparing two name columns. The respondent, on examining each pair of names, each in a different column, shows in which pairs the names are identical or different.

The subtest measures **the perception aptitudes necessary in clerical work.**

2. **Computation.** Task duration: **6 minutes**

The test consists in arithmetic operations with integers: addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

The subtest measures **the numerical aptitudes.**

3. **Three-dimensional space.** Task duration: **6 minutes**

The test is composed of series of plane reference drawings (dotted where they should be folded) and a number of four tri-dimensional objects. The task is to identify the one in the four objects resulting from folding the plane drawings.

The subtest measures **the general learning ability** and **the spatial perception aptitude**.

4. **Vocabulary.** Task duration: **6 minutes**

The test is made up by sets of four words. The task is to indicate the two words that have similar or opposite meaning.

The subtest measures **the general learning ability** and **the verbal aptitude**.

5. **Tool matching.** Task duration: **5 minutes**

The test is made up of series of exercises containing a reference drawing and four other drawings (slightly different in shade or the amount of white and black filling) of a certain tool in the shed. The task is to identify the one in the four drawings similar to the stimulus drawing.

The subtest measures **the form perception aptitude**.

6. **Arithmetic reasoning.** Task duration: **7 minutes**

The test is composed of a number of arithmetic problems and the task is solving them.

The subtest measures **the general learning ability** and **the numerical aptitude**.

7. **Form matching.** Task duration: **6 minutes**

The test is made up of two groups of linear forms. The task is to find in the second group the correspondent of the forms in the first, based on their size, width, pattern, etc.

The subtest measures **the form perception**.

8. **Mark making.** Task duration: **60 seconds**

The test is composed of series of squares in which the subject must mark with the pencil – as fast as possible – three lines, two vertical and one horizontal underneath.

The subtest measures **the motor coordination**.

9. **Placement.** Task duration: **3 trial x 15 seconds each**

Materials necessary for this subtest and the next subtest (nr. 10) consist in a rectangular board divided in two sections – with 48 holes each – and a number of cylindrical pegs. The task is to take out the pegs from the upper section and insert them into the corresponding holes in the lower section, by taking two pegs at the time, one by each hand. The task is performed three times, seeking to move as many pieces as possible in the allotted time.

The subtest measures **the manual dexterity**.

10. Rotation. Task duration: **3 trials x 30 seconds each**

Materials necessary for this subtest are the same as for the previous (no. 9). With this subtest, the lower part of the board has 48 pegs already placed into holes. The task is to remove one peg from a hole by rotation and then reintroducing it into the hole, using the preferred hand. The task is performed three times, seeking to take out and reinsert as many pegs as possible in the allotted time.

The subtest measures **the manual dexterity**.

11. Assemble. Task duration: **90 seconds**

Materials necessary for this subtest and for the next (nr. 12) are a rectangular board with 50 holes, several metal rivets and washers. The task is to pick up (with the preferred hand) a metal rivet from a hole on the upper side of the board and at the same time take a washer off a rod with the other hand. Then the washer is placed on the rivet and are inserted in the lower part of the board in the hole corresponding to the hole on the upper side from where the rivet has just been removed (using only the preferred hand). The task implies performing as many operations as possible in the allotted time.

The subtest measures **finger dexterity**.

12. Disassemble. Task duration: **60 seconds**

Materials necessary for this subtest are the same as for the previous (nr. 11). The task is to remove the metal rivet with its washer from a hole on the lower side of the board, insert the washer on a rod with one hand and – at the same time – introduce the rivet (with the preferred hand) into the corresponding hole on the upper side of the board from where the rivet has just been removed. The task implies performing as many similar operations as possible in the allotted time.

The subtest measures **finger dexterity**.

The 9 key aptitudes defined within GATB are:

Aptitude G – General learning ability is measured in subtests 3, 4, and 6 (*Three-dimensional space, Vocabulary and Arithmetic reasoning*). Aptitude **G** is defined as the ability to “catch” ideas, understand instructions, find general principles, reason and issue judgements; it is highly correlated with the success in school.

Examples of work situations: acquiring knowledge, carrying out procedures, understanding oral or written instructions and applying them in various work situations.

Examples of occupations where the weight of aptitude **G** is significant: air controller, engineer, teacher, pharmacist, doctor, accountant, mathematician.

Aptitude V – Verbal aptitude is measured in subtest 4 (*Vocabulary*). Aptitude **V** is defined as the ability to understand the meaning of words and use them adequately, understand language, relationships between words, as well as sentences and phrases as a whole.

Examples of work situations: mastering the meaning of texts in a training, understanding reference materials used in work situations, presenting or understanding oral or written instructions, mastering the technical terminology specific to certain fields.

Examples of occupations where the weight of aptitude **V** is significant: writer, sociologist, librarian, physical therapist, journalist, secretary, audio-visual expert.

Aptitude N – Numerical aptitude is measured in subtests 2 and 6 (*Computation and Arithmetic reasoning*). Aptitude **N** is defined as the ability to perform arithmetical operations, rapidly and accurately.

Examples of work situations: exchanging money, book keeping, making exact measurements, geometrical drawing and calculus, weighing, comparing.

Examples of occupations where the weight of aptitude **N** is significant: accountant, architect, technician in a medical laboratory, navigator.

Aptitude S – Spatial aptitude is measured in subtest 3 (*Three-dimensional space*). Aptitude **S** is defined as the ability to visually perceive geometrical forms and three-dimensional objects represented bi-dimensionally, as well as the capacity to recognize new forms of objects moving into space.

Examples of work situations: drawing up design plans of buildings and vehicles, understanding the motion of vehicles and mechanic components, anticipating the effects of interaction between the elements of various structures.

Examples of occupations where the weight of aptitude **S** is significant: designer, radiologist, technician, engineer, plumber, topographer, technical designer, mechanic.

Aptitude P – Form perception is measured in subtests 5 and 7 (*Tool matching and Form matching*). Aptitude **P** is defined as the ability to perceive significant details of objects and drawings, make comparisons, and discover differences.

Examples of work situations: inspecting technical processing elements, checking colours, assessing fabric quality.

Examples of occupations where the weight of aptitude **P** is significant: engineer, airline pilot, data operator, fashion designer, interior designer.

Aptitude Q – Clerical perception is measured in subtest 1 (*Name comparison*). Aptitude **Q** is defined as the ability to perceive significant details in written or verbal messages, notice differences between text copies, and identify calculus errors.

Examples of work situations: correcting – rapidly and accurately – texts, documents, numerical tables, ordering and classifying office documents according to significant criteria.

Examples of occupations where the weight of aptitude **Q** is significant: librarian, cashier, archive worker, data operator, dispatcher, quality controller.

Aptitude K – Motor coordination is measured in subtest 8 (*Mark making*). Aptitude **K** is defined as the ability to have a good eye-hand-finger coordination, perform rapid, fine and precise movements.

Examples of work situations: manipulating – rapidly, correctly and accurately – objects in space, assembling, taking apart, ordering.

Examples of occupations where the weight of aptitude **K** is significant: piano player, surgeon, nurse, graphic designer, hairdresser, airline pilot, driver.

Aptitude F – Finger dexterity is measured in subtests 11 and 12 (*Assemble and Disassemble*). Aptitude **F** is defined as the ability to perform fine movements with one's fingers in the process of handling objects and performing various activities.

Examples of work situations: manipulating with the fingers, rapidly and accurately, various small objects in order to accomplish day-to-day or work activities.

Examples of occupations where the weight of aptitude **F** is significant: watch service man, repairman and tuner of fine measurement apparatus and instruments, electrician, welder, assembler, carpenter.

Aptitude M – Manual dexterity is measured in subtests 9 and 10 (*Place and Turn*). Aptitude **M** is defined as the ability to perform hand movements with ease and skill.

Examples of work situations: using hands and wrists in placing, rotating, pushing or pulling objects or small parts.

Examples of occupations where the weight of aptitude **M** is significant: engraver, violinmaker, metalworker, polisher, upholsterer.

Scoring the results obtained on administering GATB (in one session, 2.5 hours, or partially) can be done manually or electronically.

Compiling a special battery of tests that should serve investigations for certain situations or fields of activities involves a previous selection of the criteria for psychological measurement and then deciding from the complete GATB upon those tests that will serve the purpose agreed with the counsellor. Analysing the correlations of performance in tests with the criteria considered decisive in the investigated field makes the choice.

Manual scoring is done with a transparent grid placed on the answer sheets. The time for getting row scores in a subtest – assuming the right answers – does not exceed 5 minutes. The row scores for each test are converted into standard scores with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 20.

Incorrect or no answers are not penalized; only more than one answer to an item is considered incorrect and not counted as right answer.

Examples, case studies, exercises

For practical reasons, the occupations GATB operated with have been classified into five large categories (families) – depending on levels of complexity, responsibility, education and training. It was considered more appropriate to work with a smaller number of categories when clients are advised, since the risk of error is reduced and at the same time the beneficiaries of counselling are warned of the multiple options they have, of the professional mobility opportunities, or continuing learning is suggested to them.

GATB is used (both for the client and the counsellor) to:

- discover the aptitude related strengths and weaknesses of beneficiaries, when it is a question of opting for an occupation;
- identify the need for additional learning and training in order to fill a position in the future;
- evaluate the degree of realism in one's professional goals with those of others;
- discover occupational domains compatible with the client's aptitude structure;
- compare one's aptitudes to those of people in certain positions;
- anticipate professional success in a certain occupational area.

Target population

GATB allows measuring the general aptitudes of subjects with certain educational levels and in need of support for choosing an occupation. The average number of school years amounted to by subjects making up the representative sample is 11. In this situation, teenagers and young adults are the categories of clients most frequently investigated with this general aptitude tests battery.

Method evaluation

In the making up of GATB two categories of norms were taken into consideration: those belonging to the reference group and criterial (pertaining to specific aspects and aptitude structural patterns of occupations).

The main characteristics of the reference group (representative sample of approximately 1000 persons) involved in the research for establishing the standards for the results of GATB – Form B are related to: occupation (in various fields), gender (in balanced proportion), age (an average 30), geographical residence and educational level (11 years of study).

The main criteria for defining GATB norms refer to the *occupations content* in terms of tasks to fulfil by relying on certain abilities, aptitudes, skills, and knowledge (considered decisive in obtaining professional performance) that the tests must identify in subjects, and *professional standards* variable from one occupation to the other – in terms of aptitudes – which are believed to ensure success and efficiency.

Aptitude patterns in the occupational realm of GATB consist in three of the most significant aptitudes that can ensure the satisfactory fulfilment of a list of occupations. GATB has 62 such patterns containing combinations of aptitudes compatible with certain occupational clusters (over 1200). The motivation behind these patterns (targeting aptitude areas from the dominantly cognitive to the mostly manual) resides in the similarities of the requirements as regards aptitudes and the contents of work.

Research and evaluation related to this instrument have shown that GATB actually measures three large categories: **cognitive** (through: *General learning ability*, *Verbal ability* and *Numerical ability*), **perceptive** (through: *Spatial perception*, *Form perception* and *Clerical perception*), **psychomotor** (through: *Motor coordination*, *Finger dexterity* and *Manual dexterity*), which can provide all the necessary data to make reasonable predictions regarding future performance of clients on the labour market.

Cognitive abilities (G, V, N) are more useful in anticipating positive results in learning (in school) and training, than in work competence.

Psychomotor abilities (K, F, M) are more useful in anticipating work competence.

Perceptive abilities (P, Q, S) seem to correlate in a balanced manner both types of criteria (positive results in learning and training, work competence).

GATB is a very practical tool of psychological evaluation used in counselling and workforce placement because of the following **advantages** it brings: rather short administration time, facile scoring, leading to a complex and stable aptitude image of the client, operative interpretation of the data needed for entering the labour market, etc.

The main critical observations / **disadvantages** regarding GATB (according to Anastasi, 1988) target the following aspects: all tests are performance tests and have limited duration, do not cover in a satisfactory manner the range of aptitudes important in work activities, reasoning and mechanical aptitudes are undervalued or inadequately measured, the differentiating value of the battery is relatively low.

We further mention that administrating the subtests in pre-established time frames may leave out or underrating certain performances in some clients (slow, timid, meticulous or illiterate of psychological tests), and that the length itself of the battery might discourage insufficiently motivated people from pursuing with the entire test. This last aspect pleads for a preliminary interview and preparing / motivating clients for the tests battery.

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Psychological Tests Battery for Cognitive Aptitudes

(BTPAC)

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History

Psychological Tests Battery for Cognitive Aptitudes (in Romanian: *Baterie de Teste Psihologice de Aptitudini Cognitive – BTPAC*) consists of 23 tests and represents the materialization of a new generation of psychological tests. In the past, the practical need to have measurement instruments for mental aptitudes put pressure on psychologists who created measurement instruments even before having sufficient theoretical and experimental data on mental processes. For instance, the Binet-Simon intelligence test is based on a rudimentary theory on intelligence, which was available at the time, in the early years of the last century. When Binet was asked what intelligence was, he answered: “intelligence is what my test measures”, by explaining the construct through the test and the test through the construct. Similarly, the subsequent attention, memory, intelligence and other tests were created on the basis of already outdated theories. In the meantime, cognitive psychology, through the theoretical and experimental research undertaken, has developed new models and theories of mental functioning, much more valid than those underlying classical tests. Our own research and the analysis of literature has led us to the belief that psychological evaluation instruments available on the market are at least 20 years lagging behind the latest theoretical and experimental research. Consequently, synchronizing / updating cognitive measurement instruments is a clear necessity.

In this context, in 2003 the Ministry of Labour in Romania offered the opportunity to elaborate a psychological tests battery for cognitive aptitudes for vocational guidance and counselling. The financing of such a project rallied our research efforts. Each item bears

the mark of collective competence. The author is *the group*. The result of these efforts – the Psychological Tests Battery for Cognitive Aptitudes – is the expression of a new generation of tests, where measurement instruments and theoretical and technical modelling are synchronized. The fundamental principle underlying this feat has been: ***the most relevant and valid cognitive tasks have been standardized and becoming tests.*** Further, each test is the result of tens or sometimes hundreds of experiments, guaranteeing its construct validity.

Theoretical background

BTPAC measures cognitive aptitudes that is our main endogenous information processing capacities. Any task we have to perform, from placing a brick on a wall or lifting a burden to scientific research or the management of a company requires information processing. The quantity and complexity of this processing varies according to the nature of the task, however the informational processing is always there. As a result, cognitive aptitudes are the most stable and powerful factors involved in performance. Recent meta-analyses have proved that cognitive aptitudes are the main predictor in work performance and successful completion of academic or professional training (Carrol, 1993). The activities that are relatively stable in time and less contaminated by knowledge gain the mark of cognitive aptitudes (Carrol, 1993).

Establishing the aptitudes measured by BTPAC relied on two sources of information:

1. Classifications of aptitudes available in the literature (e.g. Carrol, 1993; Fleishman et al., 1984).
2. The list of aptitudes in the Romanian Occupation Catalogue (COR, 2000) and Occupational Profiles (PO, 1998-2000) jointly published by the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, and The Ministry of Youth – The Working group for career information and counselling.

By correlating these sources a number of 8 cognitive aptitudes were developed.

General learning ability

General learning ability represents the attitude of assimilating new information, reorganizing it and operating with it. Thus, the general learning ability appears as a three-faceted construct: **selective assimilation of new knowledge**, which requires focusing one's attention and resisting interference; **capacity for information organization** in memory, involving cognitive inhibition and short-term memory; and an **operational component**, which involves: analytic reasoning, analogical transfer, working memory, and flexibility in categorization.

Verbal aptitude

Verbal abilities represent an essential component in the communications and human relations, at a large. The level of development of these abilities allows the efficient performance in the majority of professions, especially those requiring understanding and communicating precise contents in the domains of education, law, public relations, etc. Verbal aptitude includes several levels: **vocabulary abilities**, that is *understanding the meaning of words and correctly operating with them*, indispensable in day-to-day interactions; **syntactic abilities** represent the capacity to combine words in sentences and the sentences in phrases according to precise rules, essential in communication, especially for coding and decoding spoken and written language; and **abilities to understand written texts** refers to the reader's capacity to make as coherent a representation as possible of a written message making recourse to certain mental operations.

Numerical aptitude

Evaluating numerical aptitude is an important component both aptitude evaluation batteries and intelligence. Numerical evaluation tests are included in complex intelligence tests (WISC-R, WAIS-R, Wechsler, 1986), while multidimensional intelligence models consider numerical aptitude a specific manifestation of intelligence, part of logical and mathematical intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

As a component of psychological aptitude tests batteries, numerical aptitude tests such as those included in *GATB – General Aptitude Tests Battery* (United States Department of Labor), *DAT – Differential Aptitude Test* (Bartram, Lindley and Foster, 1992) or *EAS – Employee Aptitude Survey* (Ruch and Ruch, 1983) have proved useful in professional performance predictions (Kolz, McFarland and colab., 1998; Hunter and Hunter, 1984).

Meta-analytical studies have identified in the composition of numerical aptitude two important aspects (Snow and Swanson, 1992): **mathematical calculus ability** – the capacity to rapidly and correctly perform simple calculus using the four arithmetic operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication, division; and **mathematical reasoning capacity** – the ability to analyse a mathematical problem and using the correct method for its solving. Consequently, accurately evaluating numerical aptitude necessarily means evaluating these two components. Individual differences in numerical aptitudes can be attributed to factors such as: gender, age, education (Byrnes, 2001). Psychological studies have evinced the particular relationship between performance in numerical aptitude tests and the variables mentioned above. Thus, the numerical aptitude develops in time and together with the educational level (Giaquinto, 2001); the mathematical calculus performance is superior with women, carries significantly bigger differences before the age of 15 and in case of gifted children, and the mathematical reasoning performance is higher with men, especially after the age of 14 and in case of gifted children (Halpern, 1992; Becker, 1990; Hyde, Fennema and Lamon, 1990).

Spatial aptitude

Spatial aptitude was already evaluated in the beginning of intelligence testing (Binet and Simon, 1905). As a cognitive aptitude, the spatial aptitude is often a main component of psychological aptitude tests batteries or intelligence models (Guilford, Fruchter and Zimmerman, 1952). A series of studies concerning the cognitive structure view it as part of spatial-kinesthetic intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

Meta-analytical studies indicate that the spatial aptitude is not a general (homogeneous) aptitude; it can be divided into the following components (Linn and Peterson, 1985):

- **Spatial relations** – the component is well highlighted in image transformation tasks. *Rotation tasks* satisfy this requirement.
- **Spatial orientation** – this component refers to one's capacity to picture a perception field from another perspective. In spatial orientation tasks, a subject is requested to analyse various aspects of a space by shifting the viewpoints. Generating mental images by composing others involves the analysis of a complex perception field and the combination of the mental images thus obtained. The mental image is a cognitive representation that includes information on the form and spatial configuration (relative position) of a collection of objects in the absence of the action of visual stimuli on specific receptors (Miclea, 1994).

It has been extensively proved that these aptitudes have a significant weight in the professional performance (Smith, 1964) in certain fields: mathematics (Burnett, Lane and Dratt, 1979), chemistry (Barke, 1993), information science and technical sciences (Sorby, Leopold and Gorska, 1999).

Form perception aptitude

Perception is the process of unmediated and immediate reflecting in the cognitive system of the physical properties of objects and phenomena in their entirety, in the context of their acting upon our senses (Radu et al, 1991). There are several forms of perception: visual, auditory, tactile-kinetic, olfactory, and gustatory. Form perception tests set as their goal to evaluate the visual perception. Within visual perception, form can be defined operationally as **that aspect of a stimulus that remains invariant irrespective of the changes occurring in its size, position, and orientation**.

All the evaluations in the form perception tests refer to the capacity to perceive bi-dimensional forms, triggering three abilities:

- **form constancy:** recognizing dominant features of the target drawn forms when they undergo changes in size or position;

- **foreground-background discrimination:** identifying the drawn forms included in a general perception context;
- **position in space:** identifying flipped or rotated figures.

Clerical abilities

A clerk is “a person carrying out mainly administrative labour” (The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, 1998). This occupational cluster includes administrators, secretaries, computer operators, archive workers, typists, cashiers, various types of counsellors, other public or private administration staff (Occupational Profiles, 2002). Within these occupations, an essential characteristic is being able to work fast and accurately with a documents, that is to identify significant details or mistakes in printed materials and various categories of texts and tables.

The numerous tests used so far (e.g. *General Clerical Test Battery*, *General Aptitude Tests Battery*, *Minnesota Office Specialist Test*, etc.) show that clerical abilities are measured through tests that principally target the following aspects: perceptive abilities applied to verbal and numeric materials (the capacity to correct spelling and editing mistakes, insert a new element in a non-arbitrary series following a certain rule, check whether two series of figures or numbers are identical or not), and mathematical calculus aptitudes. These are sometimes doubled by tests that evaluate grammar and vocabulary knowledge (e.g. following written instructions, understanding messages, orthography), as well as some specific work tasks (e.g. using legal terminology, using office appliances, general procedures of administrative work).

Reaction time

There is empirical data proving the significant weight that reaction speed has on performance in various professions: driver, airline pilot, air traffic controller (Richard, 2002), policeman, martial arts instructor, stuntman (Lee et al., 2001), radio-TV announcer, stenographer, typist (Sanders, 1998), etc.

Investigating the reaction speed, we actually evaluate cognitive abilities, especially general intelligence. The concept of “reaction time” (RT) broadly signifies the time elapsed between presenting the subject with a stimulus and the answer offered. Reaction time represents one of the dependent variables most used in experimental psychology, from the very beginning. The term is used both for indicating the time necessary for the subject to respond to a specific task, and the experimental procedure itself. There are several procedural versions of reaction time: *simple reaction time*, *associative*, *discriminative*, *decisional*, *memory-related*, etc. Of these, for measurement of information processing speed, we have selected the following three: simple reaction time (SRT), choice reaction time (CRT), and memory accessing reaction time (MRT). **The simple reaction time test** (SRT) indicates the time elapsed between the (visual, auditory)

presentation of a single stimulus and the response of the subject, as proof of identification. **The choice reaction time test** (CRT) represents an extension of SRT, where the subject is confronted with two or more perception stimuli and has two or more options. **The memory accessing reaction time test** (MRT) evaluates the necessary duration for scanning one's memory in order to decide whether a recent stimulus belonged to a previously presented set (of several elements).

In a component analysis of the three reaction time tests we can identify successive processes with variable duration.

The option for the three versions was based on the results of experimental studies. First, they have proved that the corroboration of the performance achieved by a subject by all three procedures (SRT, CRT, MRT) significantly increases the informative / predictive value of the RT test (Choudhury and Gorman, 1999). Moreover, Schwitzer (2001) has shown that for the professions requiring complex activities, CRT and MRT are much more informative when we want to anticipate a high performance level.

The validity of using reaction time as measurement of the individual differences in cognitive functioning has been extensively demonstrated (Barrett et al., 1986; Bates and Stough, 1997; Bowling and MacKenzie, 1996; Carlson and Widaman, 1987, etc.). These studies revealed that the speed and consistency with which individuals perform various RT-type tasks is discriminatory for groups of individuals for whom differences have been anticipated. For instance, individuals diagnosed as mentally retarded responded with delay and less consistently in RT tests than the average population (Davis et al, 1991; LeClaire and Elliot, 1995). Similarly, gifted individuals have proved themselves to be significantly faster and more consistent in their responses to RT tasks than the average individuals (Kranzler et al, 1994; Saccuzzo et al, 1994). This advantage of speed is especially relevant in complex tasks (Schweitzer, 2001). We may state that there is sufficient experimental data to justify the use of RT tasks (SRT, CRT, MRT) as valid evaluation methods of the cognitive ability, especially for evaluation of the general intelligence. In addition, taking into account the factors mentioned, we could increase the predictive value of RT for a large range of professions requiring reaction speed.

Decision-making capacity

Initially, mathematicians and economists ran research in the field of decision-making in their attempt to find a strategy to improve the decision-making process. Normative theories (the expected value, the expected utility, the games) are such attempts to optimise the decision-making process by applying a rigorous mathematical apparatus. The research initiated by Simon (1959) and carried further by Tversky and Kahneman proved however that decision-makers do not approach the process in a rational manner.

The theory of limited rationality proposed by Simon underlies the descriptive approach of the decisional process. Descriptive approaches indicate that people use heuristics throughout the decision-making process and do not rationally analyse the alternatives they are faced with. Certainly, the idea of identifying an optimal decision-making strategy was not forgotten on the emergence of descriptive approaches. In economic environments, the idea of rational alternative analysis is still the basis of all decisional recommendations. Another direction for the pragmatist economists has been the evaluation of decision-making abilities. Knowing whether a certain person exhibits decision-making abilities is indeed a serious challenge for psychological research.

The ideal way to construct psychological tests is standardizing experimental tests. In scientific research, the particularities of the cognitive functioning are studied through theoretical lenses. In order to test the theoretical hypotheses, specific experimental tasks are formulated. In case of decision-making, the well known descriptive theoretical developments refers to the limited rationality of human decision-makers (Simon, 1959). The experimental tasks proving that decision-makers do not rationally analyse the given situation and the alternatives are diverse, but with no doubt the best known are those proposed by Tversky and Kahneman. The central thesis behind the theory of limited rationality holds that people make recourse to cognitive heuristics and personal strategies in the analysis of available information, and information processing is occasionally performed as effect of the cognitive bias. The cognitive biases and heuristics (strategies we employ in order to make decisions without accurately analysing the entire information) in the analysis of decisional alternatives are: the *framing effect*, *alternative prototypicality*, *alternative representativity*, *alternative accessibility*, *Ellsberg's paradox*, *Allais' paradox*. In the study of biases and heuristics a series of experimental tasks have been proposed. Consequently, the experimental tasks have been analysed and standardized so as to compile a collection of items for the test that should evaluate the decision-makers' rationality or their sensitivity to bias.

Method presentation

Each of the 8 cognitive aptitudes of maximum relevance for professional and academic performance has been operationalized in a series of tests. The number of tests varies according to the complexity of the aptitude. For instance, general learning ability is highly complex, with several components, therefore it has been assigned seven test categories. In exchange, clerical abilities being more specific, with fewer components, have been assigned a single test with several subscales. The total number of BTPAC tests is 23, of which 3 – those referring to reaction time – are only available on the computer.

General learning ability

Tests making up the general learning ability, and their description:

Test	Description
1. Analytic reasoning	Evaluates the capacity to discover rules and use them to solve reasoning problems. Consists of two subscales: Reasoning subscale A (inductive) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 12 items• Timing 7 minutes Reasoning subscale B (deductive) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 12 items• Timing 7 minutes
2. Analogical transfer	Evaluates the capacity to apply previously acquired knowledge in novel situations. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 22 tasks• Timing 5 minutes
3. Flexibility in categorization	Evaluates the capacity to rapidly switch categorization criteria and group objects based on the new criterion. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 9 items, each with three classification criteria (taxonomy, function, perception) – 27 sets of images in total• Timing 3 minutes
4. Cognitive inhibition and short-term memory	Evaluates the capacity to ignore irrelevant information flow, as well as remember information for a brief while. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consists of 4 lists, each with 15 words to memorize• Timing 6 minutes
5. Working memory	Evaluates the capacity of the cognitive system to hold for short time relevant information and operate with it. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consists of 10 series with five rows of digits and letters, each row consisting of a varied number of digits and letters• No time limit
6. Cognitive interference	Evaluates the capacity to resist intrusion of other information than relevant. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes three item lists (familiarization, neutral, and interference, each item being made up of a group of 1 to 4 words)• No time limit
7. Focused attention	Evaluates the capacity to focus by negative set-off. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes two lists of words naming colours, written in other colours. Each list includes 48 words written in two columns, 24 words each• No time limit

Verbal aptitude

Tests making up the verbal aptitude, and their description:

Test	Description
1. Vocabulary	Evaluates the capacity to operate with word meanings, in order to establish their level of semantics. Consists of two tests: First test (synonyms) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 15 items• Timing 2 minutes Second test (antonyms) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 15 items• Timing 2 minutes
2. Syntax	Evaluates the ability to build sentences and phrases. Consists of three subscales: First subscale – sentence completion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 10 items• Timing 2 minutes Second subscale – identifying errors <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 10 items• Timing 2 minutes Third subscale – rephrasing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 10 items• Timing 2 minutes
3. Text understanding	Evaluates the capacity to derive the adequate meaning of a written text and make inferences from the text. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes three successive texts of increasing difficulty, the task is to answer 22 questions about their contents• Timing 12 minutes

Numerical aptitude

Tests making up the numerical aptitude, and their description:

Tests	Description
1. Mathematical calculus	Evaluates the capacity to rapidly and accurately do simple mathematical calculus by using the four arithmetical operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication, division. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes a set of 15 simple mathematical exercises with natural numbers• Timing 5 minutes
2. Mathematical reasoning	Evaluates the capacity to reason on the basis of numeric series. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 20 ordered series• Timing 10 minutes

Spatial aptitude

Tests making up the spatial aptitude, and their description:

Tests	Description
Mental images – transformations	Evaluates the capacity to transform image representations, particularly by rotation. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 10 items• Timing 5 minutes
1. Spatial orientation	Evaluates the capacity to analyse a field of stimuli through a given perspective and to offer information on that field, starting from a newly requested perspective. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 10 items• Timing 5 minutes
2. Generating images	Evaluates the capacity to remember a series of images and to combine them. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 10 items• Timing 15 minutes

Form perception aptitude

Tests making up form perception aptitude, and their description:

Test	Description
Form constancy	Evaluates the ability to perceive form constancy. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 12 items• Timing 5 minutes
1. Detail perception	Evaluates the ability to perceive details of graphic materials and objects. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 12 items• Timing 5 minutes
2. Complex perceptual analysis	Evaluates the ability to discriminate foreground from background. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 12 items• Timing 5 minutes

Clerical abilities

The test for clerical ability is described as follows:

Test	Description
1. Clerical ability	Evaluates three aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) detail perception in written materials and tablesb) identifying differences between the original and a copyc) identifying and correcting words and numbers in a text<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 25 questions• Timing 10 minutes

Reaction time

Tests making up the reaction speed, and their description:

Tests	Description
1. Simple reaction time	Measures the motor reaction speed on being presented a stimulus. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 30 geometric figures shown for 0.5 seconds each• No time limit
2. Choice reaction time	Measures the choice speed between two stimuli options. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 30 showings of 0.7 seconds each• No time limit
3. Memory accessing reaction time	Measures the speed of retrieving information. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 20 showings of a series of 6 letters, each shown for 3 seconds• No time limit

Decision-making capacity

The test for decision-making capacity is described as follows:

Test	Description
Decision-making capacity	Measures decision-maker's rationality, and sensitivity to bias and indecision. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes 14 items• Timing 7 minutes

The aptitude level is a result of the median between the respective test levels, considered as an interval scale. The level of an aptitude also represents the performance interval and not a discrete punctual quota. In the BTPAC tests the 5 class normalized scale was used. To build the standards the following steps were taken:

- ordering of scores from the highest to the lowest;
- establishing the frequency of each score;
- establishing the cumulating frequency;
- calculating the percentage of each scale;
- creating links between the score and the percentage of the cumulated frequency.

The five steps in the scale also designate performance intervals. Since they are ordered, the dispersion within an interval is low and the difference between intervals is constant, that is 1δ . Intervals the performance levels roughly represent a scale of intervals on which arithmetic operations can be performed.

Target population

BTPAC can be applied to people aged between 12 and 50 years. BTPAC standards are gender-specific and distributed in four age intervals: 12-15; 16-18; 19-29 and over 30 (it finally comprises a minimum number per test of more than 1000 persons).

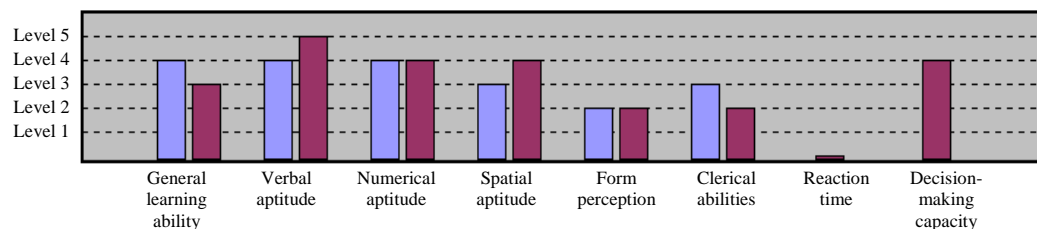
Examples, case studies, exercises

Although aptitudes are not the only factor involved in professional performance, the chance of success is the highest in those professions for which the aptitude requirements are met. In the Romanian Occupational Profiles (PO) practically every occupation has a certain aptitude profile, expressed on five levels (1 – very poor, 2 – poor, 3 – medium, 4 – good, 5 – very good). BTPAC helps establish the level for each aptitude, according to the performances in the corresponding test, also on five levels or normalized classes. Therefore, *it can be checked whether the aptitude profiles of the individual and of the profession match*. According to the difference between the two profiles it can be seen to what extent a person is suitable for a profession or group of professions *in view of his or her aptitudes*.

In order to offer maximum leverage to the counsellor, the comparison between the two profiles is automatically performed by the software:

- *level 0* – selects the professions matching the profile exactly;
- *level 1* – selects the professions requiring lower level aptitudes than the individual has;
- *levels 2, 3, and 4* – selects those occupations requiring aptitudes situated 2, 3, and 4 levels under the individual's aptitudes.

Each time the professions selected for the respective level are displayed as well as those on preceding levels. Thus the person requesting career counselling and guidance is gradually offered an ever-increasing menu of occupational alternatives to choose from. People may choose for instance an occupation whose aptitude profile exactly matches their own, or they may choose an occupation inferior to their aptitude profile, preferred for some good reasons. Let us suppose that after having their aptitudes evaluated, clients want to know if their aptitudes are suited for a certain profession, which they specify directly. In this case, the counsellor can access the aptitude profile of the respective occupation and check whether it matches the aptitude profile of the client. Not only the occupations for which clients are suited (even overqualified) can be identified, but it can also be seen how “far ahead” are the desired occupations from clients' current level of aptitudes. Counselling will hence take the form of establishing the way through which the differences may be compensated in order to successfully undertake the preferred occupation. Comparing an individual aptitude profile against that of the occupation will generally exhibit the following graphic representation. On comparing the two profiles the counselling and guidance process becomes much more rigorous and effective.



Legend: ■ aptitude profile for selected / desired occupation
■ your aptitude profile

Method evaluation

Psychological evaluation targets either internal psychological processes (e.g. affects), or specific behaviours. Since the definition of the field may be more or less accurate we ask ourselves whether the aptitudes / characteristics measured by the test correspond to the field of evaluation. Thus, for an evaluation instrument to be considered a good measure of a field, we need to know that it actually measures what it set out to do by design. These requirements yield the analysis of its psychometric properties.

Psychological tests are an objective and standardized measure of a behaviour sample (Anastasi, 1979) and represent one of the frequently used techniques in psychological evaluation. In order that on the basis of test results to be able and formulate correct conclusions on a person's behaviour, the following characteristics of the test must be evaluated: reliability, validity, construction norms.

Reliability

Reliability is given by the relative absence of measurement errors in a psychological test. More often than not the reliability of a test refers to two aspects: internal consistency, and stability / constancy in time of the results.

Internal consistency of a test represents the extent to which all items measure the same variable. The coefficient of internal consistency is calculated by reporting the variance of each item and the variance of the total score. The internal consistency of BTPAC has been analysed on the basis of Alfa Cronbach internal consistency coefficients (e.g. Analogical transfer test, Spatial aptitude evaluation tests), and on the basis of the halving method (e.g. Reaction time evaluation tests). The values obtained for each test (0.50-0.85) indicate a good internal consistency; therefore it can be said they reliably measure the constructs.

Taking into account the factors influencing the calculation of the test-retest reliability – **stability** – (the time interval elapsed between test and retest, the degree of item difficulty, the changes in the performance of the subject influenced by the first testing) the study of the stability in time of the BTPAC test results was carried out at a two week test-retest interval. The interval was determined because as strict an analysis was desired of the result stability, considering the sources that can distort the coefficient. The BTPAC tests have shown test-retest coefficient that varies between 0.50 and 0.80. The value of these coefficients indicates score stability.

Validity

Any psychological evaluation instrument must fully satisfy the requirements of validity, defined as: “the extent to which a test measures what it intends to measure” (Anastasi, 1976). Validity is the relationship between the score obtained in the test and a certain external criterion or performance. This criterion may belong to any field: staff recruitment, success in school, or medical classification. The literature indicates various types of psychological validity. They must be understood as techniques by which optimisation of a psychological measurement instrument is attempted. The modality most frequently encountered in the literature (Anastasi, 1976; Cohen and colab., 2000) is based on the taxonomy below:

- construct validity;
- criterion validity;
- content validity.

Construct validity represents the extent to which it can be held that the test measures a specific feature or variable. The construct validity of BTPAC tests has been achieved through various means: convergent and divergent validity, factorial analysis, etc.

Criterion validity indicates the extent to which the test predicts accurately for a sample of future behaviours. In this case, performance in a test must be reported to another performance called *criterion*. Criterion is defined as the standard against which is compared a test performance.

Content validity involves the systematic examination of the test content as to verify whether it covers a representative sample of the field under evaluation (Anastasi, 1976). In order to have high content validity, the items making up the test must be representative for what the test intends to measure.

Statistical procedures employed in item analysis are, more often than not, extremely complex, this is why we will only present the main indicators employed in the analysis of BTPAC items:

- difficulty index;
- discrimination index.

The theoretical value of the difficulty index is between 0 (no subject solved the item correctly) and 1 (all subjects answered an item correctly). In case of BTPAC only those items were included whose difficulty indices ranged between 0,30 and 0,70.

The discrimination index of an item measures how well an item manages to separate or discriminate between subjects with high scores and subjects with low scores. For BTPAC the discrimination indices of all items was calculated and only those whose minimum value was 0.30 were retained.

In conclusion, the validation process for BTPAC was carried out as outlined above. A pilot study analysed the correlation between evaluators as regards items content. Were

retained only the items over which the experts agreed that refer to the construct measured. Correlations between evaluators for the items retained were higher than 0.90. Items, which failed to meet the criterion, were either rewritten and reanalysed or removed from the test. In addition, each test was submitted to content analysis in pilot studies and only those items remained that had an acceptable discrimination and difficulty indices.

In using BTPAC for vocational counselling and guidance, we recommend that the user bears in mind the following aspects:

1. Aptitudes are not the only factor involved in career choice

Without going into details, we mention that repeated meta-analyses have revealed the co-participation in career-related decision-making of three large factor categories:

- a) career information;
- b) information significance for the decision-maker, and
- c) personal characteristics.

Consequently, the information obtained as a result of aptitude profile evaluation, although the most stable and with the highest prediction value, must be adequately used in counselling by relating it to the other two factors. For example, people who have rather poor aptitudes but a high motivation may partially compensate for the lack of aptitudes by the volume of knowledge and skills acquired through learning and practice, as well as a person greatly interested in a profession but with extremely poor aptitudes may fall into unrealistic fantasies.

2. Success (performance) in an occupation is based not on one single aptitude, but a constellation of aptitudes

Combined, a person's aptitudes are compensated and reciprocally enhanced in order to ensure superior performance. The aptitude profile has much higher informative value than each aptitude in part; this is why aptitudes have been treated in logical conjunction.

3. The aptitude profile of occupations has been taken from The Romanian Occupational Profiles (PO)

BTPAC offers the rigorous aptitude profile of an individual. We have assumed that the same rigour characterized the occupation aptitude profile, but the responsibility for the validity of those profiles does not lie with the authors at Cognitrom, but with the Occupational Profiles (PO) team of collaborators.

4. BTPAC must be client-centred

Automatically, BTPAC compares an individual aptitude profile to the profile of any occupation. A professional user of BTPAC (vocational counsellor, psychologist, psycho-pedagogue) must take into account that some clients may request evaluation for other needs, such as:

- self-knowledge;
- decision orientation;
- diminishing dysfunctions or dissatisfaction at the workplace, etc.

BTPAC, through the information it provides, allows to meet those requirements. We consider that beyond the intrinsic psychometric qualities (validity, reliability, etc.) an evaluation instrument must also exhibit “exploitation validity”, that is to satisfy clients’ and counsellors’ needs to the greatest extent.

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Card Sorting

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History

Card sorting enjoys particular attention among career counselling evaluation methods (Goldman, 1983; Slaney and MacKinnon-Slaney, 1990, 2000). In general, studies suggest that card sorting is an intervention whose efficiency is comparable to standardized instruments such as: SCII – *Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory* (Cooper, 1976; Slaney, 1978); SVIB – *Strong Vocational Interest Blank* (Dolliver and Will, 1977); SDS – *Self-Directed Search* (Lawler, 1979, Takai and Holland, 1979).

Starting from Tyler's original work and integrating extensions and clarifications due to Dolliver, a series of card sorting techniques were subsequently developed. Of these, according to the main meta-analyses, five have a more elaborate theoretical support (Dolliver, 1981; Slaney and Wade, 1994):

- *Dewey's Non-Sexist Vocational Card Sorting* (NSVCS – Dewey, 1974).
- *The Missouri Occupational Card Sorting* (MOCS – Krieschok, Hansen, Johnston, 1982).
- *The Vocational Exploration and Insight Kit* (VEIK – Holland, 1980).
- *The Missouri Occupational Preference Inventory* (MOPI – Moore, Gysbers, 1980).
- *Slaney's Vocational Card Sorting* (SVCS – Slaney, 1978, 1983).

In addition, using the principle of card sorting and integrating other current career theories, such as the intelligent career theory (Arthur, Claman and DeFillippi, 1995) card sorting techniques have been created with other contents than occupational, for instance *Intelligent Career Card Sorting* (ICCS – Parker, 2002).

Theoretical background

Career counselling is currently developing in a volatile environment where “the only constant element is change”. Economic, social and cultural changes make their mark and in order to help clients in the process of career search it is essential that counsellors and psychologists develop new evaluation and intervention models that should respond to these needs (Peavy, 1997; Savickas, 2000, 2001).

Evaluation and testing represent important components of the career counselling process. The main beneficiaries of their results are the help seekers (clients) who, on exploring themselves, developing decision-making and problem solving abilities, become capable of taking control of their career evolution. In a permanently changing social and economic context, the purpose of evaluation in career counselling is focused on exploring from a personal perspective one’s career and its relationship with the other segments of life. This dimension of career is known by the name of subjective career (Gattiker and Larwood, 1986) and includes personal perceptions, emotions and values related to career and influencing the evaluation both of current performance and of subsequent career-related expectations (Collins and Young, 1986).

A series of evaluation methods have been developed with a view to identifying the individual meaning of career (subjective career). Among these: narration, controlled / directed imagery exercises, graphic career representations, metaphors, card sorting. The conclusions of card sorting technique studies suggest that any combination of the two types of methods (card sorting technique – as a means of identifying expressed interests – and interest inventory – as a way of identification of the mapped interests) do not significantly add to the efficiency of career exploration interventions (Talbot and Birk, 1979; Takai and Holland, 1979).

Goldman (1983), one of the pioneers of the technique, wrote: “*The distinctive value of the technique is given by the fact that it allows / requires clients to project themselves into a number of occupational titles, classifying occupations idiosyncratically, according to the values, aims, interests, abilities or other aspects they wish to focus upon when sorting ... What results is usually a richer image of the person in relation to occupations, compared to the one obtained through standardized inventories that come up with predefined categories where answers are placed ... Similar to a projective test, card sorting technique allows an observation of the approach to the task – slow or fast, determined or hesitant, specific or vague, clear or unclear, simple or complex, informed or uninformed.*”

Vocational card sorting technique represents an approach to career exploration in the context of career counselling, requiring active involvement on the part of the counsellor and on the part of the client.

Card sorting was first used as a research method. Tyler (1960) used the respective technique in the study of individuality, and the data obtained encouraged him to use it as a counselling method and not just as a personality evaluation tool. In his paper published in *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Tyler started from the premise that individuality is given by the choices people make and the way these choices are organized. The method to investigate this hypothesis consisted in three stages, to this day underlying the procedure of card sorting in career counselling.

In the first stage, subjects were confronted with 100 cards showing occupations, leisure activities, community activities, etc. and were asked to place them in the following categories: “*I would not choose*”, “*I would choose*”, “*Indifferent*”. On eliminating the items under “*Indifferent*”, in the second stage subjects were requested to subdivide the categories “*I would not choose*”, “*I would choose*” into occupations, according to their common aspects. Thus, subjects were required to group occupations they rejected for a certain reason and those they rejected for another reason in different subcategories. The third stage consisted in questioning subjects with respect to the themes / criteria used in grouping and the reasoning behind the choices (what each category represents, what the elements in the same group have in common, what differentiates them, which subcategories are more important, etc.).

Tyler considered this is the procedure to yield the uniqueness of the person involved in the process of career choice. Unclear though the validation the technique was, the data resulting from testing the subjects in two successive moments strengthened the belief regarding the usefulness of the method in identifying individuality. The overlapping percentage in case of occupational choice was 61%, and in case of leisure activities 54%. The conclusions of the study showed that card sorting is also efficient as a component of counselling and not just as a personality evaluation method.

Tyler’s card sorting technique was later refined and enriched by Dolliver (1967). He recognized the qualities of the method and considers card sorting a form of structured interview, despite having more in common with tests or inventories.

Dolliver research supplied further examples of the use of card sorting laying a particular stress on the role of the counsellor in stimulating the integration of information obtained from card sorting. Adding stages such as occupation hierarchy according to the client’s preference and ordering reasons for choice by their importance, Dolliver reduced the gap between card sorting and clinical intervention, stressing on the holistic approach to career exploration. In this context, the psychometric properties specific to classical evaluation instruments lose their worth and aspects such as exploratory validity gain greater weight (Tittle, 1976), alongside the capacity to stimulate the career exploration. In his work, Dolliver argues that card sorting is a structured interview technique especially targeting the reasons for which a subject makes certain choices, and in this context the concepts of reliability and validity have different meaning and contents compared to the context of a

test. High reliability is negative in counselling since an interview technique is valid when it more rapidly leads to identifying more important counselling topics, which are often different from the ones presented by the client in the beginning.

Method presentation

In general, the technique uses *three sets of cards*, realized so that they can be easily handled, and the career exploration task should be easy for the client (Slaney, 1978, 1983; Slaney and MacKinnon-Slaney, 1990, 2000).

The first set consists of 6 cards (size 5 x 8 cm) labelled according to Holland vocational personality types with a short description for each type.

The second set includes:

- a. 3 cards (4 x 6 cm) representing the categories: *“I have great interest in these activities”*, *“I have little or no interest in these activities”* and *“I dislike these activities”*;
- b. 23 cards (4 x 6 cm) for interest areas such as: social services, religious activities, science, politics, law.

The third set of cards is made up of:

- a. 3 cards (5 x 8 cm) representing the categories *“I may choose”*, *“unsure”* and *“I would not choose”*;
- b. 107 cards (3 x 5 cm) with occupation titles. Occupation cards designate professions such as: reporter, nurse, administrator, carpenter, dentist, geographer, secretary, etc.

The card sorting technique is available in two versions: a) the sorting is done in the counsellor's presence and monitored and b) self-administration, which means that the subject is offered the cards and the self-testing instructions, and results processing is performed in a subsequent session, together with the counsellor.

Opting for a testing version is done according to the complexity of the problem the subject seeks solution to (Moran, 1991).

If he/she is undecided or confused with respect to choosing an occupation, the counsellor may decide on facilitating the sorting process by a series of clinical monitoring strategies. For this, the counsellor may use the technique of reading out loud the protocol, and by

noticing verbal and non-verbal behaviours may stop for clarifications or intervene as needed. The counsellor may inquire about family, career or social relations in order to better understand the way the client makes decisions.

If the subject is uncertain about his/her self-image, knowledge or understanding of the contents of certain professions, or choosing an occupation from several available offers, the counsellor may suggest self-testing. The process itself gives the client the opportunity of clarification and confirms the counsellor's trust in the client's capacity to solve career-related problems without outside help. In a subsequent session, the counsellor may ask questions and clarify on the one hand the client's perceptions of the card sorting and on the other the results. This is a less time-consuming procedure without being less informative.

Standard testing procedure of card sorting technique involves the following stages (Slaney and MacKinnon-Slaney, 1990, 2000):

- **Stage I:** Counselees are prompted to read each of the six descriptions of the Holland vocational personality types and order them according by the degree of reflection of their own selves, starting with the most similar. The order is written down on a sheet of paper for further use.
- **Stage II:** Counselees sort the cards with activity fields into three groups, according to the expressed interest: "*I have great interest in these activities*", "*I have little or no interest in these activities*", and "*I dislike these activities*". The client focus then on the first five activities of the greatest interest and the 5 activities that are the most repulsive, and writes them down on the sheet of paper.
- **Stage III:** Clients are asked to divide occupation cards into the following categories: "*I may choose*", "*unsure*" and "*I would not choose*". After selection, they are asked to examine in turn occupations in each category. For "*I would not choose*", occupations are grouped according to common features. For instance, people often view *dentist* and *doctor* as related and usually group them together. When all the cards under "*I would not choose*" have been grouped, common features will label each group. The labels may focus upon values, aptitudes, fears, family-related aspects, social or economic status, educational or financial aspects, etc. The groups and labels are also written down.

After this stage has been completed, clients turn to the category "*unsure*". They will be asked to analyse the occupations in this category and decide whether they would like more information on some. Information sources can be discussed later. Finally, clients must specify why these occupations have been placed under "*unsure*" and how relevant their status is in the process of career change.

Clients will then turn to the category “*I may choose*” and arrange cards in logical groups by their common elements. When all cards have been sorted, clients will be asked to label each group and try to motivate the choice of the respective occupations. Again the groups and labels will be written down.

In addition, clients will be requested to select the first 10 occupations in order of preference and seek relationships, similarities and differences among them. Each occupation can be examined in order to identify the aspects that can facilitate or obstruct the attainment of career-related aims. Any other occupation may be added and then ordered by preference and analysed, even though it has not been included among the occupational cards.

In case of self-administration, clients go through the stages described above individually, with a series of supporting materials, and then discuss the results with the counsellor. For instance, *Slaney’s Vocational Card Sorting* (SVCS – Slaney, 1978, 1983) offers three important brochures to help with self-testing. The first brochure describes the technique so that clients might run it on their own (“*Directions for the Vocational Card Sorting*”). The second brochure offers information on the process of vocational exploration, suggests occupational information sources and draws clients’ attention to the aspects they might have in mind before meeting with the counsellor (“*The Vocational Card Sorting – Understanding Your Results*”). The third brochure helps localize occupations (“*The Occupation Finder*”).

Card sorting is flexible enough as a technique to allow a series of variations in its application. Counsellors may use their creativity and ingenuity to adapt the technique to the specific problems and needs of their clients. For instance, occupation cards may be sorted by several criteria:

- a. how a client sorts at present compared to the way he or she did in high school;
- b. how mood interferes with sorting – whether the client is in a good or bad mood;
- c. in case of a physical handicap, clients can be instructed to sort ignoring the handicap;
- d. if there is a strong tendency for stereotypes, women may be asked to sort cards the way a man would do;
- e. if there is a strong family pressure a client may be prompted to sort congruent to his or her parent’s choice.

The alternatives of card sorting are also possible due to several existing versions of the techniques. Of these, the following are most used.

1. *The Non-Sexist Vocational Card Sorting* (NSVCS). The technique was initiated by Dewey (1974) in the article “Exploring interests: A non-sexist method”. It requires 76 occupation cards and mostly follows the classical administration procedure. The occupations are however distributed unevenly both according to the Holland types (from 9 in the category Conventional, to 21 in the category Social), and education (12% require average or inferior education, and 65% higher).

The non-sexist character of the technique is given by the fact that, unlike many contemporary NSVCS instruments, here:

- the same occupations are proposed both for women and men;
- occupational titles are neutral from the gender point of view;
- the process-oriented the technique allows the counsellor to intervene and explore gender biases the moment they occur during sessions.

2. *The Missouri Occupational Card Sorting* (MOCS), elaborated for university level (Krieshok, Hansen and Johnston, 1982) includes 90 occupations distributed evenly around the Holland vocational personality types. Since the target group is specified (undergraduates and post-degree students), 25% of the occupations require high school level, 63% BA degree and 12% MA or PhD. MOCS is the only card sorting technique without self-testing, where the counsellor’s presence is necessary. In addition, the authors require the ordering not only of the first 10 preferred occupations, but also of the rejected ones. Dolliver himself considered that MOCS provided the most information in the career exploration process, but no empirical studies could be found to prove it.

3. *The Vocational Exploration and Insight Kit* (VEIK) (Holland et al, 1980), represent a combination of card sorting and SDS (*Self-Directed Search*). The card sorting includes 84 occupations distributed evenly around the Holland vocational personality types. The occupations are the same with those used by SDS and VPI (Vocational Preference Inventory).

In a meta-analysis, Dolliver (1981) considered VEIK to benefit from the richest and most varied list of reflection questions. The kit allows the calculation of the Holland codes and confronting the person with the various roles played during the sorting of occupational cards by gender, religion, social status, etc.

4. *The Missouri Occupational Preference Inventory* (MOPI) (Moore, Gysbers and Carlson, 1980) includes 180 occupations evenly distributed for three educational levels (average or high school, college or post-high school, university or post-), but unevenly distributed according to the Holland types. The manual accompanying MOPI relates

occupations to the ones in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) allowing the calculation of the Holland codes as well.

Investigating the reasons for choosing or rejecting an occupation is done for each occupation of the categories “*I may choose*”, “*I would not choose*”, without regrouping within the categories. The reasons are ordered by frequency. On the basis of these values scales, the clients order the occupations and then the Holland codes can be calculated.

5. *Intelligent Career Card Sorting* (ICCS) (Parker, 2002) implies investigating three types of career-related knowledge (“*know why*”; “*know how*” and “*know who*”) through as many card sets. Each set includes approximately 40 statements about the three types of knowledge used in career-related decision-making. The subjects are required to select those statements that show the present way of relating to career for each of the three fields of knowledge:

- a) “*know why*” – reflects personal values, interests, needs, and family or work relationships (e.g. “*I like working in a supportive environment*”, “*I want to make a good income*”, “*I want to be directly responsible for the results of my work.*”);
- b) “*know how*” – highlights skills and expertise we can offer (e.g. “*I seek to become more adaptable to various situations*”, “*I am learning with the aid of the Internet*”, “*I want to learn how to work with others more efficiently*”);
- c) “*know who*” – involves social relationships within and outside work (e.g.: “*I want to work with people I can learn from*”, “*I am looking for support from people around me who are interested in my career*”, “*I keep in touch with my family*”).

A summary of the main characteristics of these technique versions is presented in the following table.

Synthetic presentation of the main card sorting versions

Technique name	Author, year	Description		
		Contents of cards	Testing forms	Procedure
<i>Dewey's Non-Sexist Vocational Card Sorting</i> – NSVCS	Dewey, 1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 77 occupational cards, grouped unevenly, according to the 6 Holland personality types (9 under Conventional, 21 under Social) 12% of occupations require an average education level, 65% higher education and 23% no education 	Two forms of administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the counsellor's presence self-administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> standard administration procedure
<i>Missouri Occupational Card Sorting</i> – MOCS	Krieshok, Hansen and Fohnston, 1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90 occupational cards, grouped equally according to the 6 Holland vocational personality types 25% of occupations require an average education level, 63% higher education and 12% post-degree 	Administration only in the counsellor's presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> standard administration procedure, plus a hierarchy of the first 10 occupations under "<i>I would not choose</i>".
<i>The Vocational Exploration and Insight Kit</i> – VEIK	Holland and associates, 1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 84 occupational cards, grouped evenly according to the 6 Holland vocational personality types 25% of occupations require medium education, 50% higher and 25% post-degree 	Two forms of administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the counsellor's presence self-administration, with additional materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> standard administration procedure

<i>The Missouri Occupational Preference Inventory – MOPI</i>	Moore and Gysbers, 1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 180 occupational cards, grouped according to the 6 Holland vocational personality types • 33% of occupations require an average education level, 33% higher education and 33% post-university 	Two forms of administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the counsellor's presence • self-administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standard administration procedure
<i>Slaney's Vocational Card Sorting – SVCS</i>	Slaney, 1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 107 occupational cards, grouped evenly according to the 6 Holland vocational personality types 	Two forms of administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the counsellor's presence • self-administration, with additional materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standard administration procedure
<i>Intelligent Career Card Sorting – ICCS</i>	Parker, 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120 cards with statements from 3 career-related knowledge fields: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) “<i>know why</i>” – personal values, interests, needs b) “<i>know how</i>” – skills and expertise c) “<i>know who</i>” – social relationships within and outside work 	Two forms of administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the counsellor's presence; • self-administration 	First stage: cards are divided into categories: “ <i>suits me</i> ”, “ <i>does not suit me</i> ”. Second stage: the most important are selected from under “ <i>suits me</i> .” They are ordered and represent career needs

Target population

The flexibility of card sorting allows its application on a wide variety of clients. The technique has proved suitable both for adolescents and adults, less educated people and people with higher education, men and women, and in addition for the disabled (e.g. dyslexic). When applying card sorting to people who have no clear vocational identity or have not had any opportunity to explore the world of work, such as pupils and undergraduates, counsellors facilitate understanding of their own vocational identity and the uniqueness of their personality features configuration, as well as mediate the understanding of the relationship between their interests, abilities and personality features on the one hand and occupational selection on the other. Card sorting technique allows a productive intervention both for clients and counsellors and moreover, offers the counsellor the possibility of an interactive intervention.

In case of adults, the technique is based on an already complex image of their own person and the world of work. Card sorting may however help adult clients to flexibly understand the career-oriented decision-making process and consider alternatives in a realistic manner. Actually, the technique allows adjustments of the occupation list by adding some of interest for the client, not mentioned on cards. The individual nature of the technique allows its application to the majority of adult clients irrespective of their social, economic, and cultural background.

Many women limit their career opportunities to occupations that are by stereotype female occupations. Studies indicate differences in terms of age in selection of the traditionally feminine occupations: women over 40 and married women tend to prefer traditionally gender-biased occupations (Mackinnon-Slaney, 1986; Mackinnon-Slaney, Barber, Slaney, 1988). They may be unintentionally embarrassed by traditional career exploration values and occupational stereotypes existing in their culture. Since occupational cards are not stereotype, counsellors may actively monitor the selection process and intervene if observe a tendency to limit the options, and clients may freely explore occupations according to how well they match their potential and interests. This way, choosing a career could be rational and less influenced by gender stereotypes. Comparing the efficiency of two career exploration modalities in reducing the influence of gender stereotypes over occupational choice (card sorting and SCII), it has been noticed that choosing non-stereotype occupations was favoured by card-sorting (Slaney and Slaney, 1981).

People who need to be in control of their own decisions may thus benefit from card sorting. Since the technique lead from knowing one's self to choosing an occupation, clients integrate the knowledge of themselves and of occupations logically and independently in their decision-making process. The physical handling of the cards also satisfies the clients' need to be in control.

Method evaluation

Choosing a career is the central preoccupation of people who seek counselling, and the identification of useful intervention for this purpose is not always an easy task. Card sorting technique offers an alternative to classical career exploration interventions. It focuses on the person's individuality, generated by the client, not dependent on any computerized processing, and it offers intuitive results to clients.

Advantages:

Holistic approach to career exploration

Card sorting technique allows a complex evaluation in career counselling on at least three levels:

- understanding one's personality traits;
- preference for basic work sectors (activities);
- preference for various occupations.

As it has already been shown, in the first stage of card sorting the clients order the Holland personality types. This stage usually enhances the better understanding of one's vocational personality. It may be a genuine revelation for some clients who thus get to understand why certain occupations appeal to them and others not, why certain courses appear interesting and others are not.

A second stage of card sorting, level two of evaluation, involves clients' interests in two large activity categories (what they like and dislike doing?). These interests may be related to the Holland personality types.

The third evaluation level is related to specific occupations. While clients select occupations that are of interest to them and group them by logical similarity, the matching with the Holland personality types and preferred activities is highlighted. By examining occupations and grouping them, clients begin to understand some attitudes they have towards occupations and the personal values underlying their own choices.

Card sorting leads one towards integrating important information related to career choice (personality traits, preferences for occupations, personal values). By handling and evaluating occupational cards, people develop a more complex image of themselves and of the career choice process.

Exploratory validity

Tittle (1976) was suggesting that one of the most important characteristics of a guidance instrument is its exploratory validity that is its capacity to stimulate career exploration. Card sorting is one of the techniques involving an intense exploration activity on the part of the client who produces, monitors, evaluates, and uses the results of the exploration during card sorting. In addition, the technique stimulates career exploration outside the counselling process as well. Cooper (1976) noticed that people been subjected to card sorting read more on career options than those who have benefited from other counselling and guidance interventions.

Seizing a person's individuality

Card sorting explicitly has a person's uniqueness in view by avoiding placing that person in any pre-established personality category or career pattern. The method operates more efficiently in this sense, since it places people in the position of experts of their own career situation (Binding, Loveland, 2005). Thus, the method can be also useful for people with no work experience, so that they could take control of their own career, as well as experienced people who want to refine their choices and the management of their career complexity.

Technique flexibility

Card sorting exhibits a high degree of attractiveness for counsellors for its very flexibility. On the one hand, this allows a counsellor to conceive of and choose the best suited application modality, and on the other, according to the logical progress of the process, to offer the necessary amount of input in order to ensure efficiency.

While the interaction between the counsellor and the counselee may target important issues for the client (social, marital, personal, aptitudinal, value-related, etc.), card sorting actually focuses on the evaluation of specific occupations, offering thus complex answers to a client's vocational indecision.

Immediate and intuitive feedback

Card sorting offers counselees immediate feedback. The process of vocational exploration based on card sorting offers results in and through itself. Results are produced as the client goes through the stages (vocational personality, interests, preferences for occupations, personal values) and do not require external data scoring. The results are intuitive and immediately comprehensible.

No computer processing

The lack of technology involved in card sorting "demystifies" the decision-making. The process itself gives clients a logical and rational answer, offering them the possibility to integrate the relevant career-related information gradually. The results stem from the clients' own efforts and reflect their preparedness to find an answer to the issue of career choice.

Disadvantages:*No scoring*

Although card sorting aims to identify particular interest and reason configurations in the view of career choice and not to classify persons, the lack of scoring may negatively influence the perception of the method's importance or usefulness. People used to classical diagnosis might find card sorting less accurate.

Long time for administration

Card sorting generally takes more time than questionnaires. Both as self-administration and monitored by a counsellor it lasts 90 minutes on the average (Slaney, 1986).

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Curriculum Vitae

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History

Curriculum Vitae (CV) is based on the autobiography, understood as a usually written presentation a person makes of the events in his or her life. Autobiography is viewed as “an individual product, a personal reflection of one’s life experience, and also as a mirror of social life” (Chelcea, 2001), a highlighting of thinking models, affective and behavioural manifestations in certain moments of an individual’s evolution and in a social context.

Theoretical background

In literature we distinguish 1) relatively official forms of autobiography compiled for informing employers or Human Resources Departments and 2) others, underlining the author’s personality structure, allowing analyses and interpretations (Holban, 1978). Autobiographies in the first group resemble the current CV, since they include official data and information on place and date of birth, family members, school account, lifestyle, jobs, etc. These types of autobiographies constitute a first stage in realizing an investigation of personality. If in the case of writing a CV one obeys a strict information framework, in the case of an autobiography one mentions personal values interests and aspirations, preferences and rejections, successes and failures, significant interpersonal

relationships. CV and autobiographies require an active involvement of the client and involve him/her in a process of “guided self-evaluation” (Gibson, Mitchell, 1981).

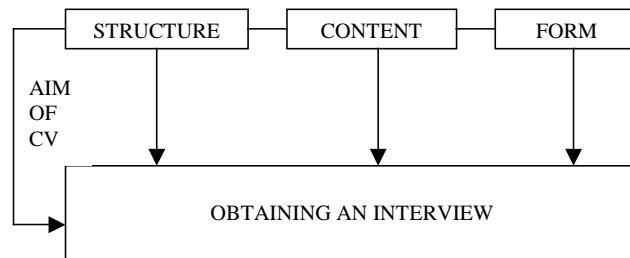
At present, in Romania *the common Europass CV model* is currently employed, approved by Government Decision no. 1021 / 2004. The new CV includes information on people’s aptitudes (technical, organizational, social, artistic, etc.) and stresses the competences acquired throughout their lifetime, in a formal, informal, and non-formal context. The authorities in central public administration, that is the Ministry of Labour, the National Agency for Employment, the Ministry of Education, the National Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises promote the common Europass CV model, also by posting filled out models on their web sites.

The Europass CV is part of the *EUROPASS portfolio*, conceived as a comprehensive instrument, ensuring a common framework for qualification and competence transparency to facilitate mobility in the European space for education and work.

EUROPASS includes: *Europass-CV*, *Europass-Diploma Supplement*, *Europass-Certificate Supplement*, *Europass-Language Portfolio*, and *Europass-Mobility*. The Europass CV is considered the “heart” of the EUROPASS portfolio, since it refers to and connects all the other instruments.

Method presentation

The CV and the letter of presentation are included in the category of *personal marketing methods*, contributing to the preparation of a person to meet potential employees by learning techniques and practicing presentation skills in competitive hiring situations. The CV is a method of written self-presentation, in a synthetic and attractive manner of one’s personal and professional qualities, taking into account the requirements of the position desired. Compiling a CV aims to raise the employer’s interest so that the applicant be invited to an interview.



The CV involves *self-reflection* and *abilities* of:

- *self-knowledge*;
- highlighting *personal results*;
- identifying and evaluating *competences*;
- stressing *positive aspects* and gliding over difficulties;
- defining clear career development *objectives* (insofar as it is possible, in accordance with the interests of the potential employer).

Of particular importance are: *attitude, positive state of mind, self-confidence, realism, commitment, and the will to succeed.*

Drawing up a CV assumes knowing the specificity of the desired job, the interests of the employer so as to group information according to the requirements of the position one applies for. In addition, certain presentation rules will be followed, but the CV will be adapted to the personality and background of the applicant.

A CV may be sent in response to a newspaper advertisement or it may be a spontaneous application addressed to certain firms, enterprises, workforce placement agencies, rigorously selected on the basis of criteria such as: the field of activity, size (number of employees), location, expansion (branching out, diversifying production).

The Europass CV includes the following *sections*:

Personal data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• first name and last name• address• contact details (address, telephone, e-mail)• date of birth• nationality• gender
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• name and type of the education and training institution• diploma or certificate obtained• results
Professional experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• employer's name• time period• field of activity• occupation / position• responsibilities• results

Personal skills and competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • languages • social skills and competences • technical skills and competences • organizational skills and competences • artistic skills and competences, etc.
Additional information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • references • driver's license • military service • family status • photograph, etc.

The *Europass CV* makes the connection with other EUROPASS instruments:

- *Europass-Diploma Supplement* and
- *Europass-Certificate Supplement* (both translated in a language of international circulation will be mentioned in the Education and Training section).
- *Europass-Mobility* registers learning and training experiences acquired by means of transnational mobility, and reference to it will be made in the Education and Training and the Professional Experience sections.
- *Europass-Language Portfolio* will be presented under the Personal Skills and Competences section.

There are no universally valid models or recipes for compiling a CV. The order of the elements mentioned above may be changed in order to highlight certain aspects and the titles of the sections may differ from case to case. What is particularly important is to obey homogeneity, rigour and the logical succession of the sections. In what follows we give an example of information ordering:

EUROPASS CURRICULUM VITAE

- **Aim**

The CV will be phrased according to the desired field and position.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

- **First name(s) / Surname(s)**

It is recommendable to mention the first name one uses.

- **Address**

Mailing address: street, number (or PO Box), code, city, country.

- **Contacts details**
Telephone, fax, e-mail.
- **Date of birth**
Day, month, year, age (if required).
- **Marital status, children** (optional)
Mention of the civil status (married, single, divorced, widower) and the number of children (if any).
- **State of health** (optional)
- **Gender** (if not obvious from the name)
- **Nationality** (if relevant for employment)

DESIRED EMPLOYMENT / OCCUPATIONAL FIELD (remove if not relevant)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The section will be developed according to the importance of studies relative to work experience. In case of young people who have recently finished their studies, highlighting and detailing academic training may compensate for the lack of work experience.

- **Institution of education and training**
The studies will be presented in reversed chronological order, starting with the most recent or of the highest level. The name of the institution, the time period and the graduation date will be mentioned.
- **Diplomas / certificates / title of qualification**
Diplomas will be indicated (no abbreviations) that are relevant to the position applied for.
- **Results**
Successes, awards and prizes, the institution that issued them and the date, in the order of the relevance to the position applied for.
- **Articles, publications** (optional)
The publications that are relevant to the position applied for will be mentioned with title, journal, issue number and year, publishing house, city.

- **Training stages, scholarships**

The more important stages will be indicated alongside those that have relevance to the position applied for, and evaluation reports could be attached (if any). The information may be inserted into a table:

Country, city	Period	Purpose of training / professional visit

WORK EXPERIENCE

This section will highlight successes and positive aspects of one's career, significant positions and responsibilities held over time. The information will be delivered in reversed chronological order (starting from the most recent) so that the employer retains the most important and recent.

- **Time period**
- **Occupation or position held**
- **Main activities and responsibilities**
- **Name and address of employer** (firm, institution, etc.)
- **Type of business or sector**

To be defined accurately, by using impact terms or action verbs.

Example:

Position / function	Activities / responsibilities
Head of financial office	Drawing up, checking and carrying out budgets Management control and analysis Treasury management Salary management Fiscal and social statements Computerized accounting

- **Outstanding results**

Notable results of work tasks that are of relevance for the new position. For instance, as head of a sales team the turnover was 20% higher than that of other teams.

PERSONAL SKILLS

Abilities and competences relevant to the position applied for and the means of acquisition will be presented.

- **Languages** – mother tongue(s) and other language(s) mastered

The level may be a self-assessment based on certain criteria (e.g. *proficient, good, satisfactory*) for *writing, reading, speaking* skills:

Languages	Writing	Reading	Speaking
<i>English</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>	<i>good</i>	<i>proficient</i>
...			
.....			

For foreign languages, *diplomas / certificates* obtained, the date and the issuing institution will be mentioned.

- **Social skills and competences**
Refer to teamwork, interpersonal communication, conflict solving, etc.
- **Technical skills and competences**
Refer to using equipment, tools, machines, etc.
- **Computer skills and competences**
Refer to computer literacy.
- **Organizational skills and competences**
Refer to team coordination, project and budget management.
- **Artistic skills and competences**
Special aptitudes for music, drawing, theatre, sports, etc.
- **Driver's license** (on request, mention category)
- **Other skills and competences**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **Photograph** (on request)
Certain *conditions* to be fulfilled: photograph must be recent, professional, ID format, may be black and white or colour, and placed on the upper right corner of the CV.
- **References** (on request)
These are released by former professors or employers and include: name, institution, address, and contact information of the reference person. The

consent of the person willing to share such (positive) information will be previously obtained. The prospective employer for confirmation and additional information may contact them.

- **Mobility**

It is important that the employer knows whether the future employee is willing to accept frequent travelling, non-residential work.

- **Extraprofessional activities**

Sports, hobbies may be mentioned if significant, characteristic for the applicant and his/her lifestyle. It is important to insist upon those activities that allow acquiring social experience, taking on responsibilities.

- **Membership in professional organizations, awards** (optional, if relevant to the position)

- **Military service** (optional)

- **Availability**

Immediate availability is a positive aspect.

Layout of the CV:

The following requirements should be met:

- *legible*: neat (if handwritten), printed on white quality paper, A4 format;
- *printed*:
 - on one side only and with underlined section titles,
 - paragraphs separated by double spaces, 1.5 line spacing, page margins 2.5 – 3 cm,
 - all sections have a similar appearance in terms of margins, spacing, font,
- *clear*: sufficiently spaced;
- *brief*: 2 pages maximum;
- *accurate and concise*: useful, veridical information, no details;
- *logical*: information dated and logically organized;
- *concrete and precise*: demonstrable and identifiable results obtained by the applicant. No photocopy will be sent, misspelling and corrections to be avoided.

Versions of a CV:

- *chronological* presents studies and work experience in reversed chronology, beginning with the most recent and insisting on professional progress, but

also possible interruptions in activity. It is recommended when the previous experience is relevant for the desired position and field;

- *functional* insists on experience, competence, achievements, in no chronological order. It is useful for graduates, people with no work experience or who want to change the field of employment. It is also recommendable for applicants who have experience in various fields, as they should only select the relevant aspects;
- *biographic* lays stress on personal aspects (personality features, motivation, aptitudes), not insisting on work performance. It is useful in case an applicant wants to prove the existence of appropriate talents and skills;
- *combined* presupposes enumerating the main responsibilities in reversed chronological order, and among these the main competences and abilities required by the targeted work;

Some employers use *application forms* with specific sections so as to obtain the same information categories from all applicants. The form must be studied carefully and the filling out instructions strictly followed;

- *electronic* may be sent as an attachment to the employer's e-mail address or uploaded on a head-hunting website. Another possibility is creating one's own Internet page, which will have to be professional in order to persuade employers to visit it;
- *scanned CV*

Employers may request CVs that are or can be scanned. The content is saved as simple text and it will be analysed by a special localizing and identifying system that searches by keywords. Applicants should look in the initial advertisement for clues that are likely to be searched for making sure they will be selected.

Target population

The knowledge about how to compile a CV is useful for the following categories of *beneficiaries*:

- *students* in secondary school, vocational school, high school – in order to practice / simulate entering social and professional life;
- *undergraduates* who want to find a job – to practice job seeking abilities;
- *graduates* of vocational, high school or university education, interested in having a CV – to raise their chances of getting a job;
- *adults* seeking a position or wanting to shift to another field / profession – in order to learn personal marketing techniques for employment.

Examples, case studies, exercises

For the counselling of pupils / students / adults

1. Elaborate your own chronological, functional, combined CV, then discuss with your colleagues the main personal and professional qualities that might convince an employer to offer you a position.
2. Analyse with your counsellor the main difficulties encountered in drawing up each type of CV and negotiate solutions.
3. Group activity:

Topic: draw up a CV

Participants: 10-12 subjects

Objectives: exchange ideas on how to draw up and better a CV

Description:

- participants will outline their own CV;
- write on a board or flipchart a list of questions generated by drawing up the CV (format or content);
- each participant will read and analyse the CVs of colleagues, then write on the chart all the comments, favourable aspects, imprecise or difficult to comprehend ones;
- questions noted down in the beginning of the activity will also be discussed;
- at the end each participant will receive charts of useful suggestions for improving their CV.

Method evaluation

Main advantages:

- the Europass CV is a unitary personal marketing instrument allowing mobility and equal access chances for applicants on the labour market;

- it highlights important information on the applicant, on his or her professional training and experience in agreement with the requirements of the desired position;
- it allows practicing presentation in a favourable manner without going into details, in order to get employers' curiosity;
- it ensures control of the situation for an applicant, unlike an interview;
- contributes to an efficient personal management and increases the chances of getting a position, if adequately drawn up.

Chronological CV

- insists on continuity elements in the professional experience of an applicant.

Functional CV

- underlines a client's professional and intellectual qualities and is efficient in case of people who want to change fields or jobs;
- allows an employer to rapidly ascertain whether an applicant has the appropriate competence for the position;
- it is useful in case the applicant has held many similar positions, since it allows a synthesis of his or her "occupational history", avoiding the repetitive information on professional experience.

Combined CV

- presents professional experience;
- also insists on qualities and their usefulness in the new position.

Application forms

- facilitates the information management through filling out clearly delimited sections and is a model for intelligible data organization.

Electronic CV

- reaches the recipient quickly, at a low cost;
- less perishable than the classic CV (printed on paper);
- by registering on a specialized human resource website, the CV will be viewed by multiple employers.

Some **disadvantages**:

- the difficulty to choose a certain type of CV according to the purpose one has in mind;

- the method generally requires keeping within formal limits, a presentation format;
- the chronological CV may draw attention to the lack of experience in case of graduates or to interruptions in professional activity;
- the functional CV requires more time and effort to draw up.

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Presentation Letter

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Method presentation

The presentation letter accompanies a CV and its role is that of drawing the employer's attention to the applicant's aspects of training or experience in accordance with the requirements of the position. If a CV is exhaustive and includes a maximum of information ordered in specific sections, the letter only highlights certain elements of the CV, adapted to each employer.

The following terms are also used in the literature: *intention / application / motivation letter*.

The presentation letter is a succinct form of self-characterization that presents an applicant's qualities, interests and motivations. It will be personalized so as to make it evident that it has been *especially written* for the respective position. In the writing of the presentation letter the same rules will be followed as in writing a CV, but there are some specific characteristics.

The presentation letter is different from a *Thank-You Letter*. The latter – rather rarely used – is addressed to the interviewer or the reference giver; the message in these cases proves the applicant's positive attitude and remind the employer of the qualifications, competences and willingness to take part in another interview.

As regards *contents*, there are certain conditions:

- it must be clear, precise, brief;
- it must raise the employer's interest so as to invite the applicant to an interview;

- it will persuasively present strengths, qualities for the positions;
- it will draw the employer's attention to the personal degree of commitment, motivation, attitude, initiative, enthusiasm, and aptitudes;
- it will insist on the contribution the applicant could have in case of employment;
- each idea must be presented in a separate paragraph.

As regards *form*, the following *conditions* must be met:

- A4 format;
- neat layout, accurate spelling;
- easy to read font;
- no-colour paper;
- recent photograph on request.

Elements (structure) of a Presentation letter

1. Name, mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address →	..... ..... ..... .....	← 2. Date
3. Reference to the position desired (date, location and number of ad)	..... ..... ..... .....	← 4. Name, position and address of recipient
5. Introductory formula →	..... .....
6. Content (one topic per each paragraph) →	..... ..... .....
	..... .....	← 7. Ending formula
	.....	← 8. Signature
9. List of attached documents →	..... .....

1. *Applicant's name, mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address* are necessary for contact. It may also be specified when the applicant is available for telephone contact.
2. *Date*.
3. *Reference to the position* (date, location where the position was advertised): the issue of the newspaper ad or other information will be given along with the name of the position applied for.
4. *Recipient's name, position and address*: it is appropriate to know and mention them.
5. *Introductory formula*: formal language, for example *Dear Mr / Ms X* (in case the family name of the recipient is known) or *To the Human Resources Department / the Manager of...* (in case the name is unavailable).
6. *Content*: reference will be made to the requirements mentioned in the ad (professional aspects, salary, etc.), data on the applicant will be given (personal qualities, knowledge, abilities, reference to previous jobs), together with the reasons for wanting the position. Certain characteristics mentioned in the CV will be taken up, significant for the positions.
7. *Ending formula* of the type: *Yours truly, Yours sincerely*, etc.
Availability for the interview will be specified.
8. *Signature*.
9. *Attached documents*.
A list of the documents attached (*CV, diplomas in copies, references, etc.*), if requested by the employer.

Presentation letter types

Answer to an ad:

- will refer to the ad: mention title and issue of publication;
- will argue the correlation between professional qualifications and job requirements;
- will detail the reasons for which the position is wanted: qualifications, experience, personal qualities, career aims;
- will mention the CV;
- will detail availability for the interview.

Spontaneous (prospecting) letter:

- addressed to the manager of the institution / firm / enterprise;
- will show why the institution is sought for;
- will explain the reasons for desiring the position;
- will highlight the strengths in the CV;
- will request / propose an interview;
- will list attached documents.

Models for a letter of presentation:

□ **beginning:**

As a consequence of your ad on the in I wish to apply to the position of

Your ad, number on the in captured my full attention because

I would like to make use of my experience acquired as and this is the reason for my seeking a position as

I am interested in a position of in your enterprise and after a period of months / years of training I would like to

□ **ending:**

a. Mention CV (if any)

In the CV attached you will find all the information on

b. Availability for interview

I will be at your disposal to complete the CV information in an interview

I would like to avail myself of the opportunity of an interview in order to insist on aspects such as I am available at your request

c. Ending formula

Thank you for considering my application

In the hope that my letter will capture your attention, I am looking forward to hearing from you, Yours sincerely

Target population

Writing a *Presentation letter* is useful for the following categories of *beneficiaries*:

- *students* in secondary school, vocational school, high school (still in school or graduates) – in order to practice / simulate starting with social and professional life;
- *undergraduates* who want to find a job (still in university or graduates) – to practice job seeking skills;
- *adults* seeking a position or wanting to reorient themselves to another field / profession – in order to learn personal marketing techniques for employment.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Exercise 1

In groups of 3-4 subjects, write a presentation letter in answer to the following ad:

*“Multinational company in Bucharest hires **chief accountant**”.*

Job description:

- organizing and coordinating the accounting department;
- elaborating and implementing internal financial procedures;
- drawing up balance sheets, reports, and statements;
- representing the company with the control organisms.

Requirements:

- economic higher degree;
- English – conversation level;
- knowledge of law (International Accounting Standards knowledge is an advantage);
- PC – MS Office, MS Excel, and accounting software;
- minimum two years of experience in a similar position in a multinational company.

Offer (bonuses , benefits):

- very attractive salary, company car, mobile phone;
- professional environment and career development opportunities.

Exercise 2

Create a poster by using the *Presentation letter* written in the previous exercise, present it to the group and argue how it was done. Observers may ask questions, make remarks and pass constructive criticism.

Work in groups of 5 subjects and an observer.

Exercise 3

Write three *Presentation letters* that should highlight your qualities, personality, qualifications for the following positions:

- *secretary*
- *hairdresser*
- *legal adviser*

Analysis of the writing process:

- What arguments were used for persuasion?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your *Presentation letter*?
- How can you set off the strengths?
- How were the beginning and ending formulae chosen?
- How is a *Presentation letter* different from a CV?

Exercise 4

Topic: *Presentation letter*

Participants: 12 subjects (pupils / students / adults)

Objectives:

- understanding the relationship between a CV and a *Presentation letter*, of their role;
- involving pupils / students / adults in writing a *Presentation letter*;

- identifying personal aspects (personality traits, training, experience) that are significant in applying for a position.

Procedure:

- each participant will make a *Presentation letter* draft;
- the purpose of writing a CV and a *Presentation letter* will be clarified;
- the participants will read and analyse their colleagues' *Presentation letters* insisting on argument pertinence and diversity;
- each *Presentation letter* will be evaluated by colleagues, suggestions for improvement will be debated within the group.

Method evaluation

Advantages of a *Presentation letter*:

- lays stress upon academic or professional qualifications that are relevant to the requirements of the position;
- represents an opportunity for self-analysis, a reflection of motivations and professional aims of the applicant;
- if read before the CV, it represents the first contact with the employers, which could persuade them to invite the applicant for an interview;
- applicants have to put themselves in the employer's position and anticipate the latter's reactions on reading the document.

Disadvantages of a *Presentation letter*:

- it is difficult to write, since it requires accuracy and conciseness for setting off the applicant's qualities;
- requires an investment of time to communicate and adjust fundamental ideas;
- includes *the egocentrism trap*, in case of some applicants who will insist on their own qualities and interests without mentioning their usefulness or putting themselves in the employer's position;
- may bore the employer if written monotonously, without raising and maintaining his/her interest while reading.

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Values Clarification

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History

Values represent the base on which a person builds a satisfactory personal existence. Values are crystallized through social models and personal experiences.

The concept of *value* is used in various fields with different significance.

In **sociology** and **anthropology**, cultures pertaining to ages, geographical areas or generations are often described by means of the dominant values.

In the **philosophy of culture**, the study of values has been developed in axiology, an independent discipline focusing on man as a creative being. In connection with human activities, values are classified into: economic, political, artistic, moral.

In **psychology** the accent falls on the variability of values within groups and on this basis the explanation of behavioural differences is attempted. Values are leading principles of life and people seek professions in accordance with their values, personality and interests. Thus they will appreciate certain aspects of work and prefer some professions to others. Work satisfaction is associated with the agreement between personal and professional values.

In **education**, values reflect cultural models in society. Classical culture promoted the idea of harmonious personality by integrating the values of goodness, beauty, truthfulness, holiness, honour. Modern culture insisted on a complex and efficient personality and fundamental values of lawfulness, liberty, equality, solidarity. Post-modern culture puts creative personality foremost, laying stress on personal innovation and autonomy.

In **career counselling**, values are analysed in relation to other determinants of professional preference (interests, aptitudes, personality traits, etc.), whose clarification prepares and supports decision-making. The preference for certain occupations or professions is related to one's system of values. Once one's values have been clarified, there is less indecision regarding the future and more involvement in developing a professional identity.

Riffault (1993) presents the results of an investigation carried out in the 1980s in order to identify the major trends in family, work, religion, politics and the observable changes in the European system of values. As regards work, the following were considered: material conditions, salary, atmosphere, favourable work schedule, but also elements of personal success, degree of initiative, and responsibility. In Romania, Chelcea (1994) presents a research performed in the 1993-1994 that aimed to identify the professional values of Romanian university students, during the transition to market economy. The professional values inventory (Super) was used on an *indicative* sample (602 students of Bucharest universities). In the hierarchy of professional values the first positions were: a profession that should allow living one's desired lifestyle, in a pleasant work atmosphere, and with economic advantages. The study reveals that students relate to work by external motivation, and internal factors are less important. The results of the research may be explained by taking into account the social context after the change in political regime in 1989.

The Romanian Opinion Poll Institute – IRSOP carried out in 2005 a study on values, on a representative national sample for the adult population. On this occasion a personality profile of Romanians and Europeans was put together on the basis of the following characteristics: tolerance / empathy, self-consideration, cognitive abilities, assertiveness, morality, efficiency, modern / traditional. The study highlighted the extent to which certain values, social rights and principles are respected in Romania, and on the leading positions we encounter: *pluralism, minority rights, equality between men and women*. In addition, the study analysis the persistence in Romanian mentality of certain non- values such as: corruption, anomy, authoritativeness, the conservative family model, ethnic and sexual stereotypes, xenophobia, alienation, intolerance.

Theoretical background

Career choice theories consider a profession productive and stable when:

- it is freely chosen;
- it was selected from many possible alternatives;
- it is in accordance with the person's abilities, interests, and values;
- it benefits from the support of significant people in the client's life.

In the theory of vocational choice, Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, Helma hold that the significant factors in choosing a career are: the living environment, the education level, individual values, personality traits. The authors draw attention to the fact that each occupational activity type lies on values that may be accepted or not, may suit one or not. Choosing a profession is influenced by the quality of choices made in relation to the values of various careers.

Super (1996) includes in his theory on the genesis of professional choices and preference two fundamental dimensions: lifetime development and articulation of social roles. Of the ideas relevant to our subject we mention:

- people differ with respect to aptitudes, needs, values, interests, personality traits, and self-image;
- in order to practice any profession, a combination of capacities and personality traits is needed, however one individual can practice several professions and implicitly various people with different characteristics can practice the same profession;
- using one's own resources and capacities to the maximum in accordance to personal values produces satisfaction in work.

Plant proposes an ethnologic perspective on professional values and their implications for counselling. A research performed in Denmark evinces three systems of values, corresponding to the following typologies (Christensen, 1987, 1988, apud Plant, 1998):

- *The Career maker affirms:*
 - *"work is my life, my way of expression",*
 - *"I study all the time, permanent study is me",*
 - *"I expect inspiration and personal development from my job",*
 - *"I am trying to combine leisure and work".*
- *The Wage earner says:*
 - *"life is not just work, it is leisure as well",*
 - *"work does not take up my whole time",*
 - *"work and leisure are two different aspects".*
- *The Entrepreneur declares:*
 - *"I am my own boss",*
 - *"I can organize my own time",*
 - *"I take courses once in a while",*
 - *"I work on several projects at the same time".*

The analysis of the three perspectives evinces their concept of:

- *work* – personal development, job, or task;
- *spare time* – combined with work, completely separate, or in alternation;
- *lifelong learning* – seen as a process of personal growth or a simple tool.

Each perspective includes positive elements: passion for work in case of the careerist, balance in case of the wage earner, flexibility for the entrepreneur, but also different reactions to unemployment. The careerist will feel lost, the wage earner will lose his or her income and social relations, and the entrepreneur will start a firm or company.

All these have an impact on counselling and target *aspects* such as:

- the counsellor's activity influencing his or her system of values and the way they are reflected in daily practice or in employing the methods and instruments helping clients to be aware of their own values;
- the competitive environment of market economy where career-centred values and entrepreneurs are especially favoured, while pressure is put upon the wage-earners' values;
- the major changes in life may determine changes or adjustments in professional values; a counsellor plays an important part in supporting a client to clarify certain contradictions in the system of personal and professional values;
- sets of complementary values where each has something to offer, and a counsellor may help client find a balance between the three perspectives.

Method presentation

Values are fundamental beliefs or motivations guiding human activities. In his work "*Counselling and Values*" (1970), Peterson (apud Gibson, Mitchell, 1981) analyses *values* by comparison to *needs, purposes, beliefs, attitudes, preferences*. Values are motivational forces, criteria on the basis of which aims are set. They are composed of: knowledge, approval, selection. Peterson affirms that values are "hypothetical constructs", represent the "desirable", in the sense of what "must be done" or what a person perceives to be the right thing to do under certain circumstances.

Numerous definitions are focused on the relationship between values and personality or highlight the link between values and society:

- "*values, interests and attitudes are important dimensions of personality organically inter-correlated*" (Chelcea, 1994);

- “as socialized individual preference, values include affective, cognitive and conative elements, revealing the action potential of human individuals, groups and communities” (McLaughlin, 1965, apud Chelcea, 1994);
- the value system of an individual is a “a multifactor spiral or behavioural influence modelling and dominating the decision-making capacity” (Smith, apud Gibson, Mitchell, 1981);
- “values do not exist in isolation, but are structured in ordered, complex and contradictory, dynamic systems that reflect social conditions” (Chelcea, 1994);
- values are “states and ways of action, considered desirable and bearing an essential role in orienting human actions, establishing objectives and aims, strategies, methods and action paths” (Zamfir, 1998).

Values are described by making reference to *standards and behaviours* (Mace, 1972, apud Gibson, Mitchell, 1981). *Standards* are attempts of human communities and groups to set rules that should ensure the keeping and expressing of values. *Behaviours* are ways of interaction, according to certain standards, and in order to conserve values.

A separate category is represented by professional values, defined as a “*subsystem within the axiological system that refers to particular aspects of the professional activity, more or less desired*” (Super, 1970, apud Chelcea, 1994).

Raths, Harmin, Simon (1966, apud Gibson and Mitchell, 1981) have proposed the following criteria that *values* fulfil:

- *choice* – free, between alternatives, upon careful analysis of each option;
- *cherishing, evaluation* – carefully holding on to, finding satisfaction in choosing and the will of publicly declaring one’s values;
- *action* – transposition into a behaviour model by exercising choice several times in life.

According to the capacity to determine behaviour, values may be *operative*, with a high probability of generating manifest behaviour, and *intentional*, with a low probability of being turned into manifest reactions (Chelcea, 1994).

Guichard and Huteau (2001) make the distinction between *general values* that correspond to the aims of existence, and *specific values*, targeting particular fields. To subscribe to certain values means that a choice has been made regarding aims and behaviours preferable and superior to others. Values, interests, and needs refer to different aspects of motivation.

Values are more general, abstract, and fundamental compared to interests. Values are set later than interests, in adolescence, while *needs* are states of tension. Interests may manifest themselves through value choice, to the extent to which preferences for particular situations or activities are means of reaching certain ends. The complex

relationship between values and interests may be illustrated by this example: altruistic values may be satisfied in the medical profession, by taking care of sick people in a hospital (*the social type*, in Holland's theory) or as a bank manager (*the enterprising type*).

Harmin and Kirschenbaum (apud Gibson and Mitchell, 1981) proposed a "values pyramid", including the following levels:

- *level of information*: facts, information, abilities;
- *level of application*: facts, information, and the learning of how to apply them in various situations;
- *level of values*: using facts in one's own life and understanding what they mean to him/herself.

Next, we review *values* in the literature.

Rokeach (1973) distinguishes a series of "fundamental" values (18), designating personal objectives (e.g. "leading a quiet life") or social objectives as (e.g. equality, liberty), and "instrumental" values (16), linked to the ensemble of behaviours that have a positive moral connotation proving certain qualities (ambition, honesty, responsibility).

Perron (1981) wrote about five categories: *status* (the desire for admiration, an adequate position, substantial earnings), *accomplishment* (the desire to perform creative activities that allow self-expression), *climate* (the desire to have an organized and agreeable environment), *risk* (the desire for competition and unpredictable situations), *liberty* (the desire for independence).

Schwartz (1992), following Rokeach, advanced a list of 56 values that can be grouped in 10 categories and organized on the basis of a circular model. On one side we find the values that refer to surpassing one's self (kindness, universality), which are in opposition with the values referring to self-assertion (power, self-confidence). On another side are the values targeting change (autonomy, stimulation, hedonism), in opposition with the values of continuity (conformism, security, tradition).

Super (1991) created *The Inventory of Professional Values*, composed of 15 categories:

- *altruism* ("the possibility of contributing to the good of others");
- *aesthetic values* ("manifest in activities allowing the realization of aesthetic objects and contribute to beautifying the world we live in");
- *intellectual stimulation* ("it is associated with professions allowing for autonomous reflections and continuing learning");
- *professional success* ("reflects the appreciation of a profession that gives the satisfaction of a job well done");

- *independence* (in case of professions allowing a person to work “after a personal plan and at one’s own pace”);
- *prestige* (in professions “attaching importance to those that perform them and gain respect of the others”);
- *leading others* (in professions “allowing the possibility of planning and organizing the work of others”);
- *economic advantages* (“reflect the orientation towards well-paid professions”);
- *professional security* (in case of professions where “an individual is sure to hold on to a job”);
- *work atmosphere* (“refers to satisfactory work conditions”);
- *relationships with superiors* (“work supervised by a fair boss with whom one gets along well”);
- *relationships with colleagues* (“activity offering the opportunity of good social relations with the colleagues”);
- *lifestyle* (“it is associated with professions where employees can “organize their life the way they like”);
- *variety* (in case of activities “with diverse operations”);
- *creativity* (associated with professions that involve “making new things or products”).

Sagiv (1999, apud Guichard and Huteau, 2001) proposed *the correlation of interests*, according to Holland and the *values theory* of Schwartz. For example, *artistic and intellectual interests* are associated in a positive way with *universality*, which regroups values such as: caring for the environment, beauty, tolerance, justice, equality, peace, and in a negative way with *conformism*. In addition, the author establishes positive correlations between social interests, and kindness. Conventional interests are positively associated with security and conformism, while negatively with universality, autonomy, and stimulation.

Clarification techniques

When a person adequately uses values clarification techniques, the probabilities of transposing conflicts or discrepancies into positive decision is increased and life becomes more satisfactory for the person and constructive from a social point of view.

Brown and Brooks (1991) establish a series of stages in the clarification of a client's values with the counsellor's support:

- awareness about the importance of values in decision-making, motivation and satisfaction related to work;
- using formal and informal values clarification techniques;
- making one's values list;
- discussing discrepancies occurred in case of contradictory values;
- analysis of the implications of values on professional choices or changes in the client's life.

The list of values will be compared to the interests, aptitudes, abilities and roles in the client's life. Should any contradictions arise, they will be discussed with the counsellor to identify adequate reconciliation measures. For instance, in case the client is looking for a job, the counsellor will propose job alternatives that may be compatible to the client's values.

Kinnier and Krumboltz (1986, apud Brown and Brooks, 1991) formulated the following *steps* in the process of values clarification:

- identifying by the client of the values underlying each choice and appreciating the purpose of life ("my life will head in this direction if only ...");
- identifying similar difficulties in the past and the way they were confronted ("I acted this way in the past because ...");
- consulting with friends about the situation and the values involved ("if I were you, I would have ...");
- analysis of options, arguing them ("I know what you think, but please consider ...");
- allowing time for reflection ("I need to detach myself from this and reflect ...");
- making a decision based on the estimation of personal values ("I have analysed the situation from every angle. My values are... so I decide to ...").

Values clarification techniques are used both in *individual and group counselling*. There are exercises, which done individually or together with the counsellor can determine adequate behaviour on the part of the client. In individual counselling the following are of particular importance:

- establishing and maintaining the relation with the client;
- identifying and exploring the consequences of the options;

- making decisions by the client;
- recognizing the importance of being pro-active with the decisions.

Values clarification techniques have great potential in-group counselling. Numerous values clarifications techniques are used to inform clients and develop their communication and interpersonal relation abilities. The exercises used in groups of clients facilitate self-knowledge and support the clients' adequate behaviours. Of particular efficiency are the techniques allowing clients to compare, examine, and bring arguments in favour of their own values, interest, and behaviours, despite the rules imposed on them at any time by others.

Gibson and Mitchell (1981) find similarities between the values clarification process and the stages of counselling:

Values clarification	Counselling
1. Familiarization: creating an atmosphere of trust, acceptance, and open communication.	1. Establishing the relationship: developing a relation of support that should facilitate communication by the clients of the reasons for seeking counselling.
2. Developing the self-image.	2. Identifying and exploring the clients' concerns.
3. Awareness of individual values.	3. Awareness and examination of possible options for the clients.
4. Assisting individuals to choose between alternatives and freely affirm their values, having weighed the consequences.	4. Decision-making by the clients, on having analysed the alternatives of each option.
5. Supporting individuals in setting aims and actions according to their values.	5. Implementing the decision: the aims are set and the clients move on to action.

The counsellor's role

The counsellor understanding the client's values support the unravelling of behaviour, purposes, and what is significant in the client's life.

The counsellor's responsibilities in case of values clarification techniques are (Gibson and Mitchell, 1981):

- understanding his/her own values and the way they differ from those of colleagues and clients;
- accepting the clients' right to have different values;
- giving up the moralizing tone or the tendency to get involved in actions that might discourage clients from examining and meditating on their own values;

- avoiding judging clients, and creating a climate of acceptance and openness that should facilitate the values clarification techniques;
- awareness of the impact his or her implicit values may have on the client.

Target population

Values clarification techniques are especially useful in case of:

- *older students (adolescents)*, who are supported by the counsellor in decision-making and setting realistic personal / professional projects, analysing the interaction between personality factors (values, aspirations, interests, personal qualities, competence, aptitudes) and environmental factors (expectations from the family, opinions of teachers, cultural, economic and social context);
- *young people and adults*, looking for a job that may be in accordance with their values, personality, and interests. The lists obtained from professional values interests will be discussed and compared to the interests, aptitudes, abilities and roles in the client's life.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Values reflection exercise

Choose from the list below three aspects you consider most important for your future professional activity. Bring arguments.

1. Secure job	10. Making things
2. Professional trips	11. Working outdoors
3. Numerous interpersonal relationships	12. Continuing training
4. Leading others	13. Taking risks
5. Varied activities	14. Working in confined spaces (offices, workshops)
6. Work hours compatible with family life	15. Conceiving, organizing, and planning activities
7. Initiative	16. Promotion opportunities
8. Sedentary work, fixed hours	17. Taking pleasure in work
9. Being independent	18. Making a lot of money

Values classification exercise (adapted from Brown and Brooks, 1991).

Version 1

Mark with “+” in the table below important values and with “-” the unimportant ones:

No.	Values	Personal evaluation
1.	Variety in life	
2.	Routine activities	
3.	Helping others	
4.	Independence (autonomy at the workplace)	
5.	Friendship	
6.	Moral fulfilment	
7.	Affiliation	
8.	Security	
9.	Power and authority	
10.	Balanced roles	
11.	Artistic creativity	
12.	Stability	
13.	Risk, excitement	
14.	Material profit	
15.	Pleasant environment, atmosphere	
16.	Social status	
17.	Intellectual status	
18.	Competition	
19.	Influence on other people	
20.	Altruism	

Of the values marked with „+”, choose five, the most important:	Write five of the values marked with „-”. Start with the least important:

Analysis exercise of the relation between values and professions

Indicate professions / occupations / activity sectors where the professional values in the list below play an essential part:

leadership, aesthetics, material advantages, diversity, security, intellectual stimulation, prestige, altruism, agreeable atmosphere, collaboration, independence, self-fulfilment.

Add competences, personal qualities and aptitudes needed in the professions you mentioned. Bring arguments.

Values may also be evaluated through **lists of questions** (Brown and Brooks, 1991):

- What optional classes did you take in school? Why?
- What sort of people do you prefer to spend time with? Why?
- What types of jobs have you chosen? Why?
- What leisure activities you prefer? Why?
- When you went to a school, high school or university, what were your preferences? How it worked out?
- What criteria you have in mind when choosing a personal car?
- What qualities you like in your friends?
- What criteria you have in mind when buying clothing?
- Do you like to dress and act differently than the others, or look and be like them? Why?
- Which is the most important decision you have ever taken? What guided you?
- What was the worst decision you have taken? Why?
- What was the best decision you have ever taken? Why?

Personal values evaluation exercise

- Recount a touching experience in your life and motivate your choice.
- Describe what you like to do in your spare time. In case of clients with no spare time: *“if you had one hour free on one day, what would you do?”*
- Name three famous people that are your role models and explain your choice briefly.

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- values clarification techniques favour self-knowledge;
- allow maximum use of the decision-making good potential, and a smooth adaptation to the requirements of daily life;

- contribute to elaborating personal and professional projects;
- help identify the reasons of professional dissatisfaction;
- determine the causes for low self-motivation and role conflict (e.g. between profession and family);
- values clarification techniques are perceived as less threatening than traditional methods (standardized tests);
- clients answer and get involved spontaneously in values clarification exercises.

Disadvantages:

- informal values clarification instruments do not always provide relevant information;
- identifying with the help of the counsellor some correlation between the client's values, interests, and aptitudes and the requirements of certain professions takes much work and time.

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Competence Screening

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History

As early as 1922, in numerous European countries professional guidance centres and offices were created. In the beginning there were conducted *psychological and medical examinations* that required anthropometrical, physiological and psychological measurements. The individual profile had to be correlated with the profile of professions. Since there were no accurate descriptions of professions, practitioners were the ones to examine the individual profile and analyse the data obtained from interviews. They were requested to decide whether the individual profile corresponds to the client's aptitudes and then advise the latter accordingly.

In 1938, France initiated a project for re-launching the vocational training. Thus *a public service of vocational guidance* was founded, whose role was to issue a vocational guidance certificate on the basis of a psychological and medical examination. The certificate included guidance advice, but the client was not obliged to follow it through. This type of examination was abandoned in 1987. After the world war a more flexible examination was developed, which included (Guichard, Huteau, 2001):

- synthesis of information gathered in the interview with the young person and his or her parents; the interview was semi-directive and its aim was to identify the degree of personality development and motivation, and the counsellor had guidebooks signalling the aspects to be explored;
- individual or group psychological testing (intelligence and aptitude tests, professional interest questionnaires);

- completing a school record with information supplied by teachers, including psychological observations on school aptitudes, personality traits, interests, family information;
- results of the medical examination were written down in a record and could serve notice of objections to the choice of certain professions.

This type of examination required much work on behalf of the counsellor and was later replaced with a short interview, guidance information and education sessions.

Competence screening appeared in the context of the economic crisis, which caused reduction in the job availability and an increased unemployment, professional mobility, and voluntary requests of professional (re)orientation.

At the end of the 1970s, the reports drawn up at the request of public authorities underlined the need for additional training for young graduates and unemployed adults confronted with social and professional challenges. The training had to be associated with vocational guidance. In the context, *the screening practice* appeared and developed rapidly, in the early 1980s (Lietard, 1991, apud Guichard, Huteau, 2001). In the beginning, the term was *personal and professional screening*. At the same time, it was promoted idea of the right to counselling and guidance of each employee.

In the evolution of *the competence screening practice* in France, the following stages can be distinguished:

- 1986: the creation of *Inter-Institutional Competence Screening Centres*, in support of beneficiaries' access to training and jobs;
- 1989-1990: the law on individualized training credit for young people between 16 and 25 years, further extended to employees;
- 1991: the law on lifelong training that gives every person the right to a competence screening.

Competence screening is used in countries such as Italy and the Czech Republic.

Theoretical background

Guichard and Huteau (2001) analyse the points of view of theoreticians and practitioners on the aims and methods employed for re-orientation. We present a synthesis in the following table:

|

Perspectives Criteria	Theoreticians	Practitioners
Finalities	Professional guidance is a means to “reach a higher level of social justice”. Students will be selected equitably, function of their aptitudes.	Ppragmatic position, which states that guidance must be in accordance with the educational offer.
Methods	An accurate analysis of activities in order to identify the necessary aptitudes as a premise for the creation of psychological tests.	Conversation and observation will be used to identify the client’s aptitudes, and then, these will be correlated with the requirements of certain professions.
Conclusions	Ideas are based on psychological researches, which will gain amplitude after the world war II.	Practice is dominantly empirical and in the 1930s ideas proposed by theoreticians were first applied.

Edouard Toulouse laid the grounds of the psycho-technical current in France, and Henri Piéron, Jean Maurice Lahy, and Henri Laugier contributed to the creation of aptitude evaluation tests. In addition many professional monographies were published starting from the needed aptitudes for success.

The psycho-technical model is based on the following statements:

- individuals can be characterized through their stable aptitudes;
- each profession has certain requirements;
- individuals are capable of rational decisions (with counsellor’s support) and of choosing professions that match their aptitudes;
- professional success is secure when there is an optimal correlation between the person’s aptitudes and the requirements of the profession.

The “trait and factor” model was first systematically described by Franck Parsons (1909). From this notion sprang numerous reflections and research in the psychology of guidance, alongside with the very development of counselling services.

Paterson and Wiliamson (Minnesota, SUA) initiated a series of vocational guidance programmes addressed to secondary school graduates, university students, unemployed, and military. Psychological tests were created that are still in use, and also professional monographies. The first Dictionary of professions was published in 1939.

In Romania there is a tradition regarding the psycho-technical movement and the psychological examination. In the Psycho-technical Institutes and Laboratories, established in the 1930s, guidance professionals were trained, studies and scientific research published, psychological evaluation methods and tools developed. In addition, the Professional Guidance Offices were founded, subordinated from a methodological point of view to the Institutes, and they were meant to do psychological and medical

examinations and support the educational and professional (re)orientation of young people and adults.

With the development of adult training institutions, new counselling and guidance practices appeared, and the notion of *competence* was frequently used to describe knowledge, aptitudes, and capacities. It is defined in literature as a validated operational modality of knowing how to act – “*savoir agir*”, how to do – “*savoir faire*” (Le Boterf, 1994, apud Guichard, Huteau, 2001). The *competence* concept has characteristics such as:

- refers to concrete situations;
- is purpose-oriented;
- underlines the acquired nature of qualification;
- is more precise than *aptitude* or *capacity*;
- helps with flexibility in the management of human resources.

Competence screening was first used in the field of vocational training and then in education and management of personnel. At present, the staff development and management competence have become central in any organization. The prospective management of competence is a strategic mission evaluating the employees' competence with a view to ensuring adequate training or recruiting. Companies using competence-screening turn to the best account human resources and promote career management to the benefit of employers and employees.

In *Inter-Institutional Competence Screening Centres (CIBC)* in France, activities focus on career counselling and competence evaluation for adults who want to discover their own abilities, knowledge, professional and personal aptitudes. The centre's staff is made of psychologists, career counsellors, management consultants, and other specialists. The beneficiaries of competence screening become aware of the need to capitalize on knowledge, aptitudes, and other personal qualities that are thus regrouped and used in further negotiations so as to obtain a (new and better) job. CIBC works in partnership with educational, employment institutions, the Chambers of Commerce, unions, continuing training providers. CIBC also includes resource centres for career counsellors; carry out research projects, elaborate studies or run programs to enhance the exchange of practice or expertise for the increase of service quality.

Method presentation

Competence screening is a way of evaluating clients' personal and professional potential in view of new projects to entering the social and professional life. The main objectives of competence screening refer to the analysis of personal and professional competences as well as of aptitudes and motivations, with a view to clarifying a professional or

training project (apud Bjornavold, 2001). Moreover, competence screening is a form of (re)orientation frequently used in case of adults, and a complex approach involving several methods for career counselling. Using it targets the labour market and enterprises. The strength of competence screening is the *formulation of a professional project*.

This method gives high importance to the activity of the human subject and aims to produce a reflection on one's own potential as a way of support for project realization. Competence screening allows any person to make an analysis, then a synthesis of personal and professional experience, of resources included in a coherent project, finalized and adapted to personal needs and requirements of the labour market.

Competence screening is included in acquisitions recognition practices (which are different from the validation practices).

Acquisitions recognition designates all attempts of identification, with an influence on certification (e.g. training certificates). A qualification acquired in an enterprise may be recognized outside of it in the same way as the initial qualifications.

Acquisitions validation represents the correspondence made between the knowledge and competences acquired, by examinations and professional experience, with a view to obtaining equivalence. This process plays an important role in the adult guidance to the extent to which it supports clarification and realization of training pathways. In France, any person employed for at least three years, who develops personal and extraprofessional competence in relation to the content of the diploma, is entitled to a vacation in order to put together the validation file and benefit from counselling on the subject. The validation of the acquisitions acquired in non-formal and informal contexts constitute an important step for encouraging lifelong learning.

Both recognition and validation of acquisitions include a personal component, and a social one. In order to allow each person to alternatively benefit from learning and vocational training, adequate recognition, evaluation and certification mechanisms are required for the competences acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal learning.

Screening, recognition, and validation of competence require an adequate legislative framework, institutions, and specialists trained for the purpose.

The Copenhagen Declaration (2002) set as a priority the creation of a European credit transfer system for education and professional training (ECVET) that should allow dialogue and exchange between the national systems. ECVET includes all processes of education, training, and learning, whether formal, non-formal, or informal, in order to stimulate lifelong learning, encourage geographical and professional mobility, as well as the employability. As main objectives of ECVET, we mention:

- enhancing transparency and recognition of acquisitions of formal, non-formal, and informal learning in order to allow each person to build their own learning pathway;
- developing the cooperation between beneficiaries, with a view to enhancing the quality and attractiveness of training systems and careers education.

The main advantages of the ECVET system for beneficiaries are: the possibility of transferring acquisitions from a learning situation to another, passing from a national formal system of learning and vocational training to another, and capitalizing on the acquisitions of individual learning and vocational training.

At present, a competence portfolio, including a set of documents proving the possession of the respective competence, replaces the validation file. Among the competence evaluation methods we mention: direct observation of the activity, oral, written, and computerized tests.

Competence screening may be done at the request of an enterprise within a training plan or at the initiative of the employee. To this end an agreement will be signed between the three parties: the employer, the employee and the institutional competence-screening centre. The agreement includes the aims (jointly of employee and employer), and the way of transmitting the synthesis report elaborated as a result of the screening.

The duration of a screening is 24 hours, divided throughout a week's time. As regards the infrastructure, it can be more or less formal. In case of the screening targeting re-conversion, the procedure is based on a document called *individual guidance screening*. It supplies instructions for the subject on how to analyse his/her professional progress and the factors responsible for it, and identifies the elements making the structure of the project.

Competence screening includes three stages:

- *preliminary:*
 - aims: motivation and voluntary involvement of beneficiary,
 - needs are defined and analysed,
 - the whole procedure is presented – rights and obligations of beneficiary and counsellor, methods and techniques employed;
- *investigation:*
 - it takes most of the time allocated to the screening,
 - it is an analysis of personal and professional interests, motivations, in an interview, workshop, questionnaire, psychological test,
 - identifies knowledge, competences, aptitudes, possibilities of personal and professional evolution, training needs,
 - subjects receive information about the professional environment they aspire to,
 - personal and professional project is outlined.

As sub-stages of the investigation stage, we observe:

- self-exploration, as a process of analysing the subject's competences, interests, and values, followed by the outlining of a professional or training project,
- setting the extent to which the project is adequate to the social and economic reality (feasibility test) and compiling an inventory of the resources needed to accomplish the aims,
- defining the conditions of the project;
- *conclusion:*
 - the beneficiary is given the results of the investigation in the form of a document / synthesis report, and discusses it with the counsellor,
 - the counsellor insists on the positive aspects, the strengths which will support the implementation of the project,
 - the personal / professional project and the means to carry it out are discussed with the counsellor.

Throughout each stage of competence screening, the objectives are formulated, possibly readjusted by the counsellor together with the beneficiary. In the first and last stage, sessions / interviews are organized individually, while the investigation stage can be carried out in a group.

The synthesis report is handed to the beneficiary and cannot be used by other person without the formers consent. According to the Code of Labour in France, this document refers to the following aspects (apud Bjornavold, 2001):

- the circumstances of screening: information on the applicant, and the conditions of screening;
- competences and aptitudes of the beneficiary, and evolution perspectives;
- components of the professional and training project;
- the stages for each project.

The Centre for Industrial Higher Education in France proposes a screening that includes five meetings in two months. As main stages we mention:

- clarification of current professional situation;
- analysis of clients' professional competence;
- analysis of clients' interests;
- comparing beneficiaries' profiles with the characteristics of jobs they are interested in;
- presentation and discussion of results.

The National Employment Agency proposed at the end of the 1980s that guidance sessions and modules are held, similar to a screening, but with different aims, such as: regaining self-respect, developing abilities of social interaction, etc.

As types of screening (Sylvie Boursier, 1989, apud Guichard, Huteau, 2001), we can enumerate:

- *normative – integrative screening*, which sets out to verify the correspondence between subjects and their needs; beneficiaries have no decision power in this case;
- *personal guidance screening*, focusing on the individual and attempting to draw conclusions with reference to the significance of the experience acquired;
- *screening of integration* in the social and work dynamics, which focuses on identifying and evaluating the clients' acquisitions, enhancing social and professional recognition.

These screenings fit to situations of recruitment, guidance, and integration.

Michel (1993, apud Guichard, Huteau, 2001) classifies screenings as follows:

- *guidance screening*, which sets goals pertaining to a project conceptualisation, and management of a person's autonomy; this process makes recourse to self-evaluation, and takes into consideration the individual dynamics. From a theoretical point of view, guidance screening is based on approaches that value subjectivity and give attention to clinical intuition. Beneficiaries are pre-adolescent schoolchildren aged 13-14 who enter a new stage of learning and development;
- *positioning screening* has a reference point, it is more descriptive, employs evaluation instruments, and it targets stable characteristics. It is grounded in approaches that value the objective description of behaviour reflected in guidance. This type of screening is similar to the traditional psychological examination and it suits adolescents and young graduates when entering professional life, or employed adults who face professional mobility issues.

Whatever the procedure, screening requires a basic repertoire of psychological techniques, such as:

- interview (semi-structured);
- group work techniques;
- biographic approach;
- cognitive and personality tests;

- competence evaluation tests (requiring the observation of the subject in a real work environment, or in a work simulation, as well as questionnaires);
- interest questionnaires;
- computerized instruments.

The role of the counsellor

A career counsellor follows ethical principles, and ensures evaluation test and questionnaire result confidentiality. Screening could represent a moment of clash between occasionally contradictory instances of logic. A counsellor must seize the inadequacy between social and individual requests, try and quantify the gap between the official discourse and the reality of practice. A counsellor views people in their complexity, respecting their interests and autonomy. This approach requires a set of professional competences (psychological, socio-economic, legal), and personal qualities such as tolerance, openness, spontaneity, flexibility, empathy.

Evaluation of competence screening

In France there was a national analysis inquiry of the competence screening efficiency in relation to the beneficiaries' expectations. 372 beneficiaries participated from 84 *Inter-Institutional Competence Screening Centres* (Guichard, Huteau, 2001). Of these, 67% were seeking for a job.

Expectations were related to:

- self-knowledge;
- guidance with a view to:
 - choosing a training course,
 - elaborating a project,
 - changing jobs,
 - choosing a new profession,
 - finding the first employment;
- professional development:
 - recognition of competences,
 - professional development,
 - taking on new responsibilities.

Recommendations at the end of the screening referred to:

- training advice (45,2%);
- psychological advice (30,1%);
- guidance advice (29,1%);
- professional advice on the type of job desired (27,7%).

Screening results

As a result of the screening, the most frequently encountered professional projects refer to:

- guidance for a different type of training (51,6%);
- changing professions (31,7%);
- recognition of competences and aptitudes (29%);
- professional development (18,9%).

Evaluation by clients

The screening is positively evaluated with respect to aspects such as: self-knowledge, training, improvement, choosing a profession. Client satisfaction is lower when expectations are concrete: taking on new responsibilities, a job, setting up a business. Long-term consequences are especially related to training: beginning training (38% of subjects), negotiating a training course (35%).

Gaudron, Bernaud (1997) studied the psychological effects of screening, evaluated with the aid of a questionnaire. They distinguished effects with reference to:

- representation of competences and interests: self-representations are enriched and diversified, and effects can be observed also in case of the *savoir être* competence;
- self-respect (general, personal, or social);
- professional project: screening is an opportunity for elaborating realistic and stable projects;
- involvement in an integration behaviour: beneficiaries actively seek information.

Target population

Guidance performance centred on competence screening must adapt to the diversity of the public and of demands. The problems approached with clients are not identical; there are special situations (such as professional failure) or specific problems (such as illiteracy, failure to adapt to a novel cultural context).

Screening has started as an individualized performance, structured, with positive answers to the needs of *categories of persons*:

- young people who finished their studies but have no qualification and face difficulty in starting with social and professional life;
- adults who wish to benefit from professional re-conversion or re-orientation.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Example of *competence screening chart*

I am:	I am and can do:	I want in a job:	I can do:	Where:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• personality• character traits• core interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• training• life experience• talents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• work conditions• values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• professional activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• activity sectors• jobs

Exercises for career counsellor trainees:

1. Make a comparative analysis of the *guidance psychological examination* and the *competence screening* and bring arguments for their individual use.
2. Mention the main deontological issues arising in case of a psychological evaluation and in case of communicating the results of a competence screening.
3. Describe the impact of the results obtained by an employee on using the data in the competence screening report on professional performance and self-image.

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- evinces personal and professional competence and experience, and how to transfer them into the existing social context;
- supports clients to face changes in the world of work, and in an efficient career management;
- lays stress on the clarification of the client's professional project and action plan;
- requires active involvement and voluntary commitment;
- allows evaluation and recognition of acquisitions related to work, training, and social life;
- contributes to the identification of the unexplored client's potential;
- insists upon positive aspects supporting the elaboration of the professional / personal project;
- realizes the correlation between professional environment / labour market and personal characteristics;
- allows the reorganization of the beneficiary's professional priorities, the use of qualities, strengths, advantages in negotiation for employment or career choice;
- helps the management of personal resources in view of choosing a career;
- renders changes more familiar by managing their anticipation and administration;
- determines a proactive behaviour by identifying training pathways or acquisition recognition and validation procedures.

Disadvantages:

- formalized practice;
- despite the numerous efforts made to analyse beneficiaries' competences through formal and non-formal means, the synthesis report focuses on the formal aspects that can be tracked in certificates and diplomas;
- requires a large amount of work and time on behalf of the counsellor to apply evaluation instruments, interpret results and draw up the report;

- the synthesis report often contains general recommendations for training projects;
- in some cases the excessive use of standardized instruments prevents a personalized approach.

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SWOT Analysis

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History

In the beginning of the 19th century, the increasing competition between the large industrial companies stirred great interest for competitive management solutions.

The corporate decision-makers became aware that success greatly depends on the quality of the strategic decisions made together with the board members. Although apparently correct, some strategic plans often led companies to failure and bankruptcy.

This is why in the 1960s and 70s much research was carried out in the field of management, especially strategic analysis (first performed by the Stanford Research Institute, USA, in a questionnaire with 250 questions applied to 5000 directors and managers of successful companies). Centralizing the results revealed that failure was caused by fragmenting among departments the essential information inside a company, which prevented the formation of a global image of the situation for the benefit of the decision-makers, slowed down short-term decisions and caused erroneous long-term strategies. In the efforts to avoid such errors, information on internal factors (positive and negative) was collected, and corroborated with external factors that impacted on the company.

This was the starting point of what was later called SWOT methodology. Initially used in economics, where it amply proved its efficiency, the method rapidly grew immensely popular and was taken over by marketing, organizational culture, it extended into social services, demographic policies, military strategy, human resources, public relations, inventions, psychology, education, career. All these fields have adopted it and apply it differently in their strategic planning processes.

At present, the science of strategic management considers SWOT analysis to create an indispensable leverage for the long-term success of any organization (persons, group, or community) alongside other strategies: need-driven (PEST – political, economic, social, technological analysis), efficiency-driven (JIT – *Just in Time*), quality-driven (TQM – *Total Quality Management*).

Theoretical background

SWOT is an acronym for *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats*.

On a deeper investigation, the SWOT analysis offers multiple meanings according to the perspective adopted.

For people in management positions, SWOT constitutes a “**management technique**” used in understanding the strategic position of an enterprise / organization or a “**management model**” of a firm to “evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, which together with an inventory analysis of opportunities and threats from the outside of the company, establishes its current position on the market”. (http://121.ro/content/show_article).

It is also “one of the **main instruments** used in need analysis alongside PEST analysis. Need analysis is the preliminary phase in conceiving any management project” (Păuș, 2003).

From the perspective of marketing services, SWOT analysis is “a **fundamental model providing the path, the direction**, and serves as a **base for the development of marketing plans**. This is done through evaluation of strengths (what can be done) and weaknesses (what cannot be done) of the organization, opportunities (potentially favourable conditions) and threats (potentially unfavourable conditions). It is an **important step in planning**, and the value of the method is often underestimated despite its simplicity. The role of SWOT analysis is to collect information by analysing the environment and separating it into internal aspects (SW) and external aspects (OT)” (Duncan, apud Ferrell, 1998).

SWOT analysis is a **description method** of a business or a project, which by taking into account the factors with the greatest impact on the organization proves an easy and accessible way to identify and communicate these key-aspects.

In organizational culture, the method is a “**monography of the organizational moment and context**, making the inventory of human, material, informational, stakeholders’ resources. The diagnosis necessary to plan counselling activities is done by need analyses. This diagnosis underlies the subject’s strategy (counsellor, client, teacher)” (Păuș, 2003).

In human resources, career planning and counselling, the method is “an **instrument often used in strategic planning processes**”. SWOT analysis focuses on internal and external reality, examining the strengths and weaknesses within the internal environment, as well as the opportunities and fears related to the outside environment.” (www.eva.ro/cariera/articole).

Method presentation

Career counselling, guidance and planning services have adapted SWOT to the needs of their direct and indirect beneficiaries, using it both as **method, technique or instrument** for analysis (in a simple, table-like version), and as a **strategic management model** (in its complex three-stage version).

The essence of the method was captured by two American strategists as early as in the 1980s: “SWOT analysis helps understand and develop the environment where action is to be taken by allowing a balance to be achieved between the internal factors (SW) and the external ones (OT) that can intervene and influence the development and progress of activities in various ways. These are important steps in identifying and defining one’s own capacities, as well as the elements representing competitive advantages. The objective of the analysis is represented by the evaluation of one’s own situation, becoming aware of qualities, admitting to weaknesses, getting to know opportunities, and preventing possible danger” (Thompson and Strickland, 1986).

The dialogue between counsellor and client may begin with questions such as:

- What are your capacities, aptitudes, weaknesses, and faults?
- How can you set off your aptitudes and overcome your weaknesses?
- What are the opportunities and risks in your career?

First stage: Identifying and analysing the four factors

The analysis begins with **four identification lists** of the factors applicable to the client, the client’s career, the labour market, and the organization.

For enhancing understanding, a typical SWOT analysis is structured in a **four-box table (matrix)**:

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>

The lists may be structured as below:

I N T E R N	<p>Your strengths: (Aptitudes, qualities, competences)</p> <p>Positive aspects under control and that can be used in career development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work experience • Education, qualifications • ICT knowledge (hardware, software, programming) • Transferable aptitudes (communication, teamwork, leadership) • Personal characteristics (professional ethics, self-discipline, capacity to work under stress, creativity, optimism, high energy) • Successful relationships and contacts • Links with prestigious professional organizations 	<p>Your weaknesses; (Weaknesses, drawbacks, flaws)</p> <p>Negative internal aspects under control and that can be improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of professional experience • Low level of schooling • Lack of aspirations, self-knowledge, and information on occupations • Insufficient ICT training • Unexercised transferable aptitudes • Inability to look for a job • Negative personal characteristics (violating work ethics, lack of motivation, indecision, timidity, emotional instability)
E X T E R N	<p>Your career opportunities: Incontrollable external positive circumstances that can be an advantage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive trends in the fields, which may create more jobs (economic growth, globalisation, technological modernization) • Personal aptitudes are sought in many fields • Good self-knowledge and capacity to attain career goals • Promotion and personal development opportunities • Favourable location • Strong professional network 	<p>Your career threats: Incontrollable external negative circumstances whose effects can be diminished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in job offers in the field • Competition with people of your own generation • Rivals skilful in looking for a job • Rivals graduated from prestigious schools • Obstacles in the career path (lack of qualification and training, no money) • Limited professional development, routine job with no promotion opportunities • Companies uninterested in your qualifications

Unlike economics, services, and marketing, where internal factors (strengths, weaknesses) refer strictly to a firm or company (organization), in human resources these factors (as it is visible in the table above) refer to individual capacities, qualities, aptitudes, competences, and drawbacks, lack of knowledge, education or experience. Specialists believe this to be the strength of SWOT in human resources. In identifying the factors related to the inner nature of a person, the golden rule is objectivity, realism of analysis (also pertinent for organizations).

For this reason, a counsellor or a manager requesting an analysis, but especially a client will make recourse to third parties (family, friends, acquaintances) who will confront the personal self-evaluation list with their own parallel list on the subject. Questionnaires can also be used (especially in case of a group, class, work team).

If in career planning it is intended to apply the SWOT method to an institution (educational or employment provider), the analysis follows the standard SWOT procedure for any organization:

Strengths designate the advantages of the institution (e.g. market segment, number of employees) and what gives it power compared to other competing institutions. The concrete manifestation of these strengths varies among organizations, but it generally refers to fundamental competences based on resources and possibilities.

Weaknesses refer to poor aspects generating disadvantages compared to other organizations in the external competitive environment. Strength and weakness poles are identified in each organization compared to its competitors. “Although weaknesses are often perceived as the ‘logical’ reverse of threats, the lack of strengths of a firm in a field or on a market is not necessarily a weakness, unless it is a weakness for the competition. Strengths and weaknesses can be measured by internal or external audit” (Brătianu, 2000).

Opportunities are favourable factors generated by forces from the external macro-environment (demographic, economic, technological, political, legal, social and cultural dynamics), as well as from particular market segments: generation members, consumers, distribution channels, suppliers.

Are there any demographic changes influencing the labour market? Can partnerships influence the demand for products or services? Can certain transferable competences / aptitudes be used in other ways than the usual ones? Can the knowledge generated by the research and development department be turned into money by selling licenses, concepts of technologies? In order to identify the existing opportunities, the role of a counsellor is big. Together with the client, the inherent uncertainties of such a process need to be clarified.

Threats are negative aspects and limits imposed by the external environment, which are beyond the management control. These pose a type of risk that if neglected may become chronic. Threats are related to opportunities and competition.

Second stage: Identifying strategies

In order to analyse the current situation, it should be enough to list in the four boxes the four factors. This first step was the most spread in the 1970s and 80s when the method had started being taken over by other fields.

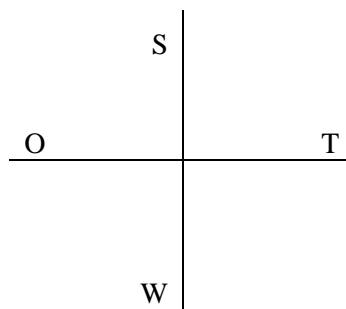
The competition required durable solutions and the analysis thus continued with identification of resistant, functional, efficient, and successful strategies to ensure long-term, not merely short-term, performance.

Here are some of the key questions that strategic management specialists have deemed necessary for managers concerned with the progress of their firms / clients: “What steps must be taken, based on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats? What is the path to follow: concentrate on using the firm’s strengths in order to capitalize on opportunities? Or accumulate more strengths in order to create more opportunities? Or should weaknesses be minimized and threats avoided?” (Brătianu, 2000).

Starting from the SWOT matrix, new objectives may be set, four categories of strategies may alternatively be elaborated and as many action plans.

“Result of SWOT analysis? Four strategic alternatives. Aside from the fact that the exact formulation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is very delicate and time-consuming, their transposition into strategic alternatives is quite an art! The adjacent idea is to profit by the combination of strengths and weaknesses, avoiding or neutralizing the combination of weaknesses and threats” (Markovits, 2003). Management models. SWOT Analysis: http://121.ro/content/show_article.php3?article_id.

In order to obtain a better global image, the internal **SW** factors may form together a vertical axis and the external **OT** factors a horizontal axis. By combining internal and external factors the following strategic alternatives may be obtained:



SO Strategies (Strategies employing strengths in order to profit by opportunities). These are the max-max type strategies, in the sense that they combine the elements most favourable to building a strategy. SO strategies use strengths and powerful elements in organization in order to make it benefit from external opportunities. The organization becomes dynamic and aggressive on the market and creates a competitive advantage for itself compared to other organizations.

WO Strategies (Strategies seeking to alleviate the effect of weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities). They are strategies of the min-max type, in the sense that they combine inside weaknesses with external opportunities. The

organization practically attempts to use opportunities in order to eliminate strengths or transform them into advantages or favourable circumstances for itself.

ST Strategies (Strategies that employ strengths in order to prevent or minimize threats). They are strategies of the max-min type, in the sense that they use the strengths of the organization in order to avoid or reduce external threats. They are defence strategies that may be transformed into attack strategies if the relation between the internal and the external forces is correctly assessed.

WT Strategies (Strategies which alleviate weaknesses and seek to reduce the impact of threats). They are min-min type strategies seeking to minimize weaknesses if external threats can be avoided. They are defensive strategies and are used especially when the organization is declining, in order to avoid bankruptcy.

The strategic alternatives described above are generic, since they need to be adapted to the particularities of clients and “receive content in the concrete circumstances of each organization” (Duncan, apud Ferrell, 1998).

Third stage: Deliberation and decision-making

Clients must decide on the most appropriate strategy in order to act upon the requirements and possibilities existing at that moment. The final purpose of any strategy is to balance the internal and the external factors in order to obtain / maintain the desired performance. Usually, a dominant strategy (offensive or defensive) is applied alongside a corrective one (e.g. min-max-min). Thus the client may afford to be more aggressive when aware of strengths and opportunities, at the same time working to correct and diminish flaws, but will apply a defence strategy if there aren't sufficient strengths and threat looms.

“Another problem is decision-making. Even if the matrix has been elaborated with care, decisions will be taken after careful analysis. In decision-making, the considerations connected to certain risks involved by each alternative and those related to resources may play an equally important part as the analysis itself” (Marcovits, 2003). In case of organizations, the decision is related to choosing the success strategy. “Success strategies seek to obtain the highest worth for each of the global indicators in the reference system specific to the organization (efficiency, quality, innovation, and sensibility to consumer demand) and for the measure attached to each indicator” (Brătianu, 2000).

Target population

The method may be applied to every client category.

The short version (matrix analysis) is often employed with pupils, university students, and young people in search of a job.

The long version (including strategy elaboration) is recommended to pupils at the end of a study cycle, undergraduates, graduates seeking career advice, adults.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Example 1: Student A. T. M., 12th grade

First stage: analysis of the four factors

Strengths / Aptitudes/ Competences	Weaknesses / Defects / Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school pupil, final year, specializing in social sciences and modern languages • IQ: 110 • Very good results in most school subjects, especially humanities and modern languages • Extra training in modern languages • Good results in foreign languages contests and literature contests • Member in theatre club and poetry club • ICT knowledge: PC • Well-developed transferable aptitudes (communication, team-work) • Personal characteristics: sociable, communicative, fluent in foreign languages • Literary and poetic talent (easily writes in prose and verse) • Dominant personality traits: honesty, morality, correctness • Optimism, high energy • Motivation to study and work • Active in spare time and passionate tourist • Pleasant-looking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited self-knowledge • Subjectivism • Insufficient information on the occupations she aspires to • No leadership skills • Inability to look for a job • Emotionally unstable • Timid, undecided, hesitant • Vulnerable under stress • No self-confidence • Low on self-appreciation
Opportunities / Chances	Threats / Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectual family, parents with higher education, working in arts / culture, services • Upper-middle life-style, information and education possibilities • Enrolled in a prestigious school • The fields of activity she aspires to are demanded and offer many jobs • Her aptitudes and qualifications help her succeed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition with colleagues in her generation • Rivals that are motivated and better skilled in finding a job or being admitted to a higher education institution • Rivals graduating from more prestigious schools

<p>in careers based on: communication, tourism, services, international relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her current qualifications allow her to take up higher education • Sufficient motivation and will for bacculaureate and faculty admission exams • Lives close to the capital city, in an area favourable to study • Numerous friends, relations and connections in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited financial possibilities • Insufficient grants available in the chosen specialization • Distance between home and faculty involves commuting or renting a place, therefore additional costs
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Second stage: Identifying strategies

SWOT analysis for this client allows the identification of the following strategic alternatives:

SO Strategy: In the desire of pursuing with her education, the client is aware that her background, aptitudes and the educational offer of the faculty chosen allows her to take up higher education. She can apply an offensive mobilization strategy in order to go through the subsequent examinations (bacculaureate and faculty admission).

WO Strategy: In individual counselling sessions the client will practice emotional control strategies in order to defeat timidity under stress and increase her self-confidence. She will learn to appreciate herself correctly and cultivate transferable aptitudes (e.g. communication) by exam simulation techniques.

ST Strategy: the realistic appreciation of her own strengths, self-confidence and thorough study for exams are ways to counteract the outside dangers: competition of colleagues in the admission exam, low financial possibilities (scholarship), distance from home (student hostel).

WT Strategy: the client will not need defensive strategies (min-min) unless she fails (highly unlikely), then the initial strategic plan will be reconsidered.

Third stage: Deliberation, decision-making and development of an action plan

The client will have to choose between the alternatives open to her after graduation. She is interested for a career in tourism, communication, public relations, literature, services, or journalism. For this she must choose where to go: International Economic Relations (at The Academy of Economic Studies), Social Communication and Public Relations (at The Faculty of Letters, in The University of Bucharest), the Faculty of Internal and International Tourism (The Romanian-American University), The Faculty of Journalism (at The “Hyperion” University, Bucharest). She finally decided to enrol to the first two faculties (state universities, no tuition fee) with different admission exam dates. (The case

study is real, the client was admitted with a scholarship in both faculties and must later decide if she is able to cope with both).

Example 2: The Municipal Centre of Psycho-pedagogical Assistance

*First stage: Analysing the four factors**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence, professionalism and enthusiasm of the counselling practitioners • Sources of finance: education budget and self-funding • Extended network of counselling offices in Bucharest schools • The success of programmes initiated and accomplished by the centre • New projects under development • Services and activities meeting the client needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a legal entity • No adequate space for counselling activities • Separating the venues for counselling services and secretariat • Insufficient communication means with individual clients and institutions
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from the local authority in education • Legal and financial support from the Ministry of Education in order to extend the network of school counselling offices • Methodological coordination and scientific assistance from the Institute of Educational Sciences • Collaboration for continuing training and development with international organizations in the field • The possibility and offers to get involved in various European projects and programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reticence of population regarding psycho-pedagogical and counselling services • Non-stimulating salaries make practitioners seek better-paid employment • Insufficient voluntary work available • Difficulty of transporting school-children from other parts of town to the headquarter venue • Private counselling centres competition

* The Matrix was developed with the contribution of counsellors in the Bucharest Centre of Psycho-pedagogical Assistance.

Second stage: Identifying strategies

SO Strategy: with strengths and opportunities (very well-trained staff and favourable external circumstances to meet the counselling needs of the target population), the Municipal Centre may apply an aggressive strategy for good results.

WO Strategy: the communication and space-related weaknesses may be corrected by requesting more support from the local authority in education (the school inspectorate) and the community (sponsorships).

WT and ST Strategies: Motivated and professional team of counsellors, qualifications, and commitment are the key elements of the centre. The extensive network of professional relationships (collaborations, training providers and beneficiaries) both in the country and abroad counteracts the threats from the private competitors. These defence strategies can only be applied in extreme situations, when the very existence of the centre would be threatened.

Third stage: Deliberation, decision-making and development of an action plan

On applying the offensive strategy, the Centre drew up an action plan meant to ensure success in the long run (becoming a legal entity, financial support and communications equipment, taking part in national and international projects and programmes as promoter or partner).

Set of questions necessary for SWOT analysis:

Strengths:

- What can you do very well?
- What are your advantages?
- What made you decide on your school?
- What were your reasons and what influenced you?
- Are these causes a consequence of your innate qualities?
- What do you expect from your job?
- What are your most important achievements?
- Who do you owe these successes to?
- How do you measure (evaluate) your success?
- What knowledge and practical work experience can you offer the company?
- What do you prize most / what has the most worth for you?

Weaknesses:

- What can be improved?
- What are you bad at?
- What should you avoid?

- What do you not know in your line of work?
- How do the gaps in your qualifications affect your performance?
- Think of an unpleasant moment in school (or at the workplace), which were caused by your personal or professional faults.

Opportunities:

- Are there any promising perspectives in the chosen field?
- What is the highest level of performance in the chosen field?
- What efforts have you made in order to find a place in the chosen field of activity?
- What can you add to your background to benefit from existing opportunities?
- Could additional training be advantageous?
- How fast would it be possible to advance in the chosen career?
- Opportunities may occur due to changes in:
 - ICT and production,
 - government policies in the field,
 - society, demographics, lifestyle, etc.?

Threats:

- What obstacles must you face?
- Do requirements change often in the chosen field?
- Does the advancement of technology threaten your position?
- What are the current market trends in your specialty?
- Compared to newly emerged fields, is the interest in your own decreasing?
- Is your field of activity subject to political, economic, social conflict?
- Is there a risk of a change in the work policy in your area of interests?
- How could economic development affect your job and the team you are part of?
- Can your company offer you access to training to maintain your competitiveness?

Method evaluation

SWOT methodology is a basic instrument for strategic management. Currently, no company can afford to make successful forecasts without a management based on performance strategies, just as no career planning can work outside elaborating strategic SWOT alternatives. The words “*to swot*”, “*swotting*” have already been coined.

Counselling and consulting services place this method in the initial phase of contact with the client, in order to offer not only a perspective over their resources and needs, but also possible solutions required by the external circumstances.

Advantages:

Listing key internal and external elements is relatively simple, quick, and effortless. This is why it might be thought that this kind of preliminary analysis feels like a game and its depth may be overlooked, especially in case of untrained pupils and adolescents, tempted to slight it.

The popularity of the method is also due to the numerous fields and categories of clients that may benefit from its results.

Accessibility and quickness at any age increases the frequency of and preference for the method compared to other more laborious ones.

In case of complete administration, when counsellors assist clients in elaborating strategies and making career-related decisions, clients may be confronted with other opinions, learn objective self-analysis, clarify their own values, adopt realistic and deliberative behaviours.

Disadvantages:

In its current format, going through all SWOT stages requires time for research, effort to make self-evaluation more objective (especially with very young clients or in case of institutions facing competition and in need of maintenance / response strategies).

In order to avoid subjectivity, clients must rely on the sincere appreciation of others, although it occasionally tends to limit autonomy in self-analysis.

In order to counteract these time-consuming issues, some US firms created interactive SWOT software that clients may purchase for self-administration.

Consequently, SWOT analysis may be used according to:

- client needs: adequate analysis of needs and resources;
- purpose: to obtain information the clients, investigate the labour market, help with personal marketing, career-planning and development (it clarifies values, maps competences, prepares an action plan);

- beneficiary: counselling should be individual rather than in group;
- phases of the counselling process (e.g. establish the client's current situation);
- degree of standardization: semi-standardised (SWOT standard).

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Interview

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History

The interview method be said to be the practical basis of any counselling and therapeutic relationship, whoever the subject (individuals, families, couples, etc).

Historically speaking, the interview method is part of the counselling process, while the communication established between the specialist and the client is the premise of success. The interview is a method that cannot be absent from any type of counselling, its history blending into the history of the field. Up to a point, counselling is a structured interview (more or less). Starting with the 1970s, counsellor trainers in North-American universities were already allotting entire courses to the method, and specialists in organizational counselling were developing structured and highly standardized interviews in order to target transferable competences or the description of a certain occupational profile.

Theoretical background

The interview in counselling is a dynamic relationship where clients aim to present themselves and their problems and obtain information, counsellors give personalized answers to the formers requests and evaluate their interlocutors so as to make decisions

on matters both parties consider to be of importance (employment, changing professions, personal, etc.).

Method presentation

Counsellors, according to the role they play in the relationship with their clients, may treat the interview method from two points of view:

Initial / information interview – this is not necessarily specific to career counselling, it is part of evaluating the client and the problem, whatever the context (school, family, psychological, career or else counselling).

Selection, recruitment, employment interview is specific to career counselling and consultancy, being generally used as an evaluation and decision-making instrument in the field of human resources. In institutions, specialists in organizational development are using *the promotion / development interview*.

In this type of interview, counsellors may play two parts:

- a. *Recruiter*: counsellors are generally in positions, such as human resources consultants or recruitment specialists.
- b. *Career development counsellor*: when the client is sought to be prepared for an interview through simulation. This is the form of interview we are going to insist upon.

Considering the organization of the questions, interviews can be: *unstructured* (when there is no pre-established order of the questions, and interviewers rely on their intuition and professional experience), *structured* (when there is a “scenario” of questions, clearly set, and rigorously followed throughout the meeting), or *mixed* (there is a scenario, but the recruiter is given a time interval to explore other aspects of the candidate’s personality).

Initial / information interview

This type of interview has two distinct purposes: counsellor collecting information on the client, which represents the first step in evaluating the nature and severity of the latter’s problems, and the creation of a positive counselling relationship.

The information interview is generally semi-structured (inexperienced counsellors are usually recommended to follow an interview guide) and can last as long as a normal counselling session (maximum 50-60 minutes).

Brammer and Macdonald (1996), referring to the counselling process, irrespective of the context, describe the essence of individual counselling by the two steps involved: the creation of the client – counsellor relationship, and the enhancement of change (positive action), both in a context characterized as “work alliance”. The authors speak about the conditions to attain a level of interpersonal relationship that might enhance change and development: counsellors must use their special personal talents and adopt a series of adequate attitudes, while clients respond with trust and willingness to the communication offer. The authors call the counselling relationship a *helping relationship*. Practically in the process of individual counselling, a moment of maximum importance is that of gathering significant information on the client.

The *intake interview* is presented by Hackney and Cormier (1996) as an essential element to attain desirable efficiency in counselling. Considered both a moment of initiation of the information exchange between counsellor and client, and an assessment method, the intake interview is different than other discussions the two might have because it involves collecting general information on the client: identification, lifestyle, current problems, personal and family history.

I. Identification data:

1. Name, address, telephone number, brief description of his/her living space (with the family, on campus, renting, alone or not, etc.).
2. Age, gender, marital status, year of study (pupils or students), job (for adults and pupils or students working part-time, temporarily or with flexible hours).

II. Presentation of the problem for which counselling is necessary:

1. When did the problem first occur, in what context and how frequently since?
2. In what way does the incident affect the client’s day-to-day life?
3. Can the client identify a pattern to this situation? When does it appear? In whose presence? Under what circumstances?
4. What was the factor underlying the client’s decision to seek counselling? Why now?

III. Client’s current lifestyle:

1. How does the client spend a typical day? What about a typical week?
2. What social activities (with friends, sports, religious, in the community) or individual ones does the client prefer in the spare time?
3. What is the client’s education?
4. Special situations: ethnic, sexual, religious minority, chronic disease, special medical treatment.

IV. Family history:

1. Parents' age, occupation, their personality, their roles in the family, the client's relationship with parents, family members, other relatives.
2. Name and age of siblings, their social and professional situation.
3. Nervous or organic diseases in client's family.
4. Family professional history, their degree of occupational and geographic stability, the way these elements have affected the client.

V. Personal history:

1. Medical history: unusual diseases, accidents, etc. from prenatal period to present.
2. Education: schools, incidents (drop-out, missing classes, expelling, particularities of the relationships with colleagues and teachers).
3. Military record.
4. Professional history: jobs and relationships with colleagues and superiors.
5. Sexual and marital history: significant problems during sexual maturation, engagements, marriages, divorces, the reason for the last separation, disappointments, frustrations. Does the client have children?
6. Alcohol, drugs and medicine addiction.
7. Previous counselling experience.
8. What is the client's personal goal? What does the client want in life?

VI. Description of client during interview:

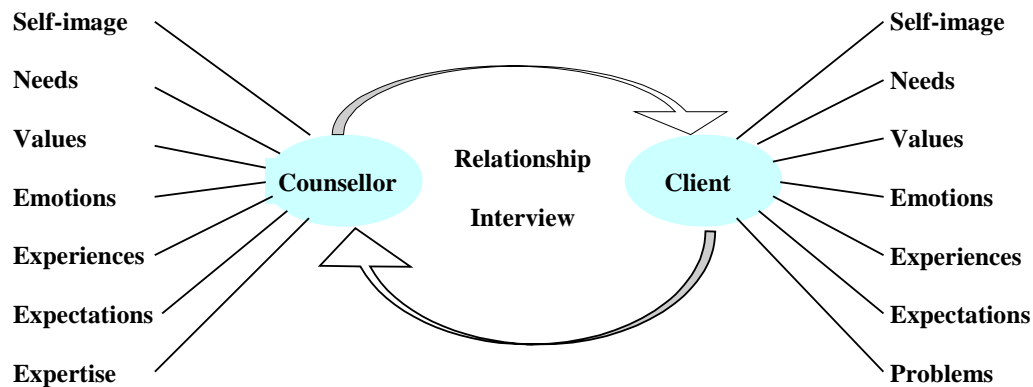
Non-verbal elements (clothing, gestures, facial expression, eye contact, visible personal effects), para-verbal (tone, timbre, intensity of voice), others: motivation, commitment, openness, flexibility, emotional availability, general culture, vocabulary, technical terms, practical communication abilities.

VII. Summary and recommendations:

The counsellor formulates conclusions and expresses possible relationships between the client's problem and the other elements described by the client throughout the interview. How realistic is the client's reason to seek counselling? Is a referral to another counsellor necessary (if here the level of expertise is insufficient)? The counsellor presents a possible scenario for future exchanges and their approximate number.

(Adapted from Hackney and Cormier, 1996)

Model of support relationship in interview



The model may be adjusted to the aims of counselling. In general, for career counselling intake interviews, the main elements are:

- outlining a general image of the client (education, professional experience, personal life);
- identifying client's professional aspirations;
- identifying barriers to attaining these purposes and the necessary resources;
- outlining the first career-planning elements;
- identifying the social roles played by the client.

There is a series of elements that should be taken into consideration by counsellors in order to organize and conduct such an interview:

- studying the interview protocol before the session start;
- presenting the ethical principles to the client;
- creating a calm, quiet environment that should inspire trust;
- using intelligible verbal language (avoiding a too specialized language), open and friendly non-verbal language;
- applying the principles of active listening and efficient communication (paraphrasing, reflecting feelings – if any, summarizing, etc.);
- flexibility; although it is very important to go over the topics of discussion as presented in the protocol, certain “signals” sent by the client (non-verbal, or verbal) will not be ignored and clarification questions must be asked with reference to some right away, or the interview must be closed or redirected;

- consulting with a supervisor (where possible) or peers, to clarify pre- or post-interview issues.

Selection, recruitment or employment interview

In what follows we shall use the term “selection interview” to designate all types of interview that are used for recruitment or promotion in any organization.

The selection interview may be structured in various ways, according to the intentions of the recruiter or human resources specialist involved in the process of hiring or promotion. In general, the questions included in the promotion interview target both aspects of the job and personal. Lately, a series of highly standardized instruments have been developed that are complementary to the interview and oriented towards competences considered critical for work performance: *Flanagan's Critical Incident Technique* (1957), followed by *BARS – Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales* and *Kelly's Repertory Grid* (Stewart and Stewart, 1981).

The recruitment interview, as a particular aspect of the selection interview, is an instrument that acts like a filter for the identification of suitable persons for a given position (open or newly created). The interview allows human resource decision-makers to gather information about a candidate, within a direct communication relationship (face to face or over the phone). The interview thus becomes an evaluation method considering those aspects of the candidate's personality that are directly related to the specificity of the position: intellectual capacities, scientific information and operational professional competences, motivation, interests, etc.

The interview may last from half an hour to several hours (not more than two-three in general).

Depending on how the questions are organized, interviews can be formal or informal. The *formal* ones are characterized by a high degree of structure, they may be carried out by a single person or a committee, in an official context, at an appointed time. *Informal* or unofficial interviews are characterized by a more relaxed atmosphere, and are usually based on a discussion between the candidate and one person in the organization. The questions are usually open and oriented towards personality traits, aspirations, and future plans of the client.

The career counsellor's role is to prepare / train the client in view of a successful recruitment interview. There is a series of information which even though does not guarantee success in an interview, helps clients form a general impression on the recruitment process and especially control their nervousness or anxiety. It is recommended that aside from informing clients with respect to the stages of an interview,

the rules to follow, the most frequent questions and the recommended answers, etc., counsellors organize simulation activities (an entire interview or merely stages), according to how much time and other resources are in the career counselling process.

Counsellors train their clients for a recruitment interview from the larger perspective of a career action plan and an “intelligent” approach to the organization, institution, or company aimed by the client. Interviews are the first direct contact with the firm clients have in view, however before the interview clients will be instructed on several other equally important stages:

- setting clear professional objectives at least on short and medium term;
- analysing the opportunities offered by the desired position and initiating some research on the specificity of the company’s activity, its economic power and impact on the market;
- applying for the position (application, CV, letter of intention) either directly, or by mail, e-mail, fax, etc.

It is important that during career counselling equal importance is allotted to all stages, not just to the interview itself. A successful interview is practically impossible without thoroughly preparing the other aspects.

In what follows, we present in brief the information considered important for training the client in view of such an experience.

The structure of a recruitment interview

In a formal interview, the questions follow a pre-established logic or scenario:

a. First contact and ice-breaking questions. Examples:

Did you find us easily?

How are you feeling today?

There may be a stage where the recruiting counsellor introduces himself or herself and then, in a few words, presents the company, its activity, the position under discussion (open or newly created).

b. Questions for the introduction of the candidate. Examples:

When did you graduate?

What is your specialty?

Did you also graduate from other training stages? Where?

Can you tell me a few things about your experience in ...?

c. Detailed questions on certain topics of interest for the employer. Examples:

We noticed in your CV that ... Could you elaborate on that?

We noticed that there is a two-year gap in your CV. Could you explain what happened?

This position requires a large amount of work. How do you plan to keep a balance between your personal life and professional activity?

d. The candidate's questions (if assured of being hired). Examples:

What are the working hours?

Where is my office or workshop?

May I visit the company?

e. The interview ends with giving thanks, possibly some comments on the employer's part:

To conclude, I think we can already consider that

I will contact you by phone within a week to communicate you the result of this interview.

Thank you for your visit.

Rules to follow

In order to be persuasive, a client must be directed to select and provide the most relevant information on his/her education, abilities, accomplishments, experience. Approximately 60% of the questions during a recruitment interview refer to these aspects. In general, inexperienced clients find it difficult to present themselves on a positive note, their accomplishments, successes, and failures. This is why it is recommended to organize simple exercises so that clients are in the position to fluently and coherently present their own achievements, abilities, experience. Fluency in discourse shows intelligence, aptitudes for inter-human relations, management skills.

There are several aspects that must be taken into consideration the moment a client prepares for an interview. These are:

The personal file, including all the documents already sent to the company, must be brought along in copy when candidates show up for the interview. Candidates must be prepared to elaborate on any aspect in their CV or other documents presented to the employer.

Psychological aspects related to self-image and the degree of self-confidence. It is recommendable that a positive strategy is adopted – clients should arm themselves with optimism and the conviction that there are sufficient reasons to consider that the interview will go well. The personal file has been accepted and an interview has been granted, therefore a premise for success already exists.

Clothing is related to the image a client presents to the others. In professional business environment, clothes very much make the man. In case of a formal interview it is compulsory to wear a dark suit, quality shoes, and accessories

(briefcase, folders). The hairdo must be adequate, the perfume used with discretion, and the jewellery reduced to a minimum.

Non-verbal language. The non-verbal signals are very significant to employers who will not hesitate to base their final decision on them, beyond the candidate's answers to questions. Thus, the recruiter will take into consideration how candidates introduce themselves, say hello, shake hands (firmly, but without overdoing it), adopt a posture and a position on the chair (not too tense and not too relaxed), eye contact (must be kept up constantly, without staring). In addition, the literature recommends practicing (difficult) answering questions under stress. If unexercised and unprepared, candidates risk to breaking eye contact suddenly, signifying to the recruiter that something is wrong.

The literature speaks of three distinct moments in preparing for an interview:

- a. *the initial stage*, in which candidates gather information on the company and the position;
- b. *the interview itself*, stressing positive attitude, complete control of the information included in the documents presented, self-presentation;
- c. *the post-interview stage*, where candidates take notes immediately after the meeting and politely ask for feedback from the company (whether this is anticipated to be positive or negative).

To sum up, career counsellors may offer clients preparing for a recruitment interview a list of certain general and concrete recommendations of the type:

- Know exactly the sort of job you wish to get.
- Find out as much as possible about the company and the job desired.
- Keep up to date with novelties in the field.
- Make up a list of your qualities, achievements and drawbacks.
- Prepare a 4-5 minute presentation of your qualities and achievements.
- Prepare to answer difficult questions targeting your drawbacks or failures so as to present them in as favourable a light as possible.
- Refer to experiences and achievements in order to prove your capacity to fulfil the professional obligations of the position you are applying for.
- Make sure your system of values is in agreement with that of the company you wish to work for.
- Think positively and have confidence in yourself. The employer is not an enemy.

- Be punctual. Coming late for an interview means a first unfavourable impression on the employer.
- Even if you are very nervous before the interview, try to eat a little, though not too much.
- Avoid any “stimulants” before the interview (alcohol, coffee).
- Pay attention to your clothing!
- During the interview it is recommended to politely refuse refreshments or coffee offered.
- Try not to schedule another important activity on the day of the interview so as to give your full attention to this event.
- Listen to the recruiter carefully. Pay maximum attention to pauses, which may be very significant!
- Be honest; do not lie about your professional experience (all the verbal information you provide, just like written references, can be checked very easily and companies actually do this).
- If you do not understand a question, ask for explanations and if necessary request some time to think about an answer.
- Avoid answering in YES and NO. Try as much as possible and without getting ridiculous to elaborate on answers and give significant details.
- Pay attention to non-verbal language! (Szilagyi, Vladulescu, 2001).

Target population

For the *initial / intake interview*, the target population is represented by all categories of career counselling clients: from pupils, students to adults, whether unemployed, pensioners, etc. The intake interview is the starting point for the crystallization of the personal relationship between client and counsellor, and the moment when the counsellor begins to collect the needed information to properly carry out the decision-making and career development activity.

For the *selection, recruitment or employment interview*, the target population is formed by applicants for that certain position.

In case of *training / simulation* for a future recruitment interview, the target population is made of counselling clients who wish to prepare themselves to applying for a certain position, if the selection requires an interview as well.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Practical activities for the initial / intake interview

Divide the candidates into groups of three: one will play the interviewing counsellor, the second – the client, and the third will be an observer or supervisor. The purpose of the activity is to practice the intake interview and at its end both the “client” and the “observer” will offer feedback to the “counsellor”.

Here are a few examples of exercise or mediation topics for clients:

- Draw up a list of all your qualities and drawbacks you are aware of, or trustworthy persons have informed you of.
- Learn to put yourself on the spot reasonably, modestly, and convincingly!
- Think about facts or episodes in your life that have proved your qualities.
- Ask a friend or relative to enumerate in writing your qualities, strengths, and faults. The list should also include examples of facts and behaviours. Compare the two lists and discuss them together.
- Imagine the interviewer asks you to speak about yourself.
- Choose from among your strengths a significant number of achievements, aptitudes, things you are good at, in order to convince the interviewer that you are the best person for the job. The qualities you choose must be related to the specificity of the position.
- Prepare a presentation of your strengths that spans over 4-5 minutes. Record it and then analyse from the interviewer’s point of view: the tone, language, arguments. Redo the exercise and the recording until you are satisfied and feel that the presentation is attractive, natural, and convincing.
- You will inevitably be asked about your weaknesses. Do not just confirm them. Explain that lack of experience or ability is not an insurmountable handicap, but an opportunity for professional development, especially if you can come up with compensating achievements or qualities.
- As for failures, if you have to talk about them, try to shed a more favourable light on them. Prove that you are aware of them, that you have learned from them, and you can defeat the weaknesses that generated them.
- In order to convince that you are committed and willing, motivated to fulfil the professional requirements of the position, provide information on: the

conception on work and professional duties, traits of will and personality, interests, aspirations, and initiatives.

- Relate events and do not enumerate qualities. Instead of saying “*I have perseverance and initiative, etc.*” recount relevant experiences for the traits you wish to prove. Such stories may end with the remark: “it can be said that I was perseverant and I had initiative”, etc.; you will thus be convincing and modest.
- Do not hesitate to present your passions, professional goals and aspirations, proving that you think in perspective.
- Select a well-known company, and imagine you wish to apply for a position. For the pre-interview stage, prepare a list of all the information you might find on the company (use all sources available).

Method evaluation

In career counselling, interviews are the cornerstone of the methodological process begun by counsellors. In this framework it is estimated that over 50% of the time is destined to interview-type activities (structured / semi-structured / unstructured). Interviews are also the most widespread selection and promotion method in an organization. The value of the method is confirmed historically and practically – it is impossible to imagine another instrument capable of replacing an interview in the process of counselling and guidance. Moreover, interviews encourage the active attitude of a client who thus follows the strategy suggested by the counsellor and is responsive to signals – especially non-verbal – emitted by the interviewer.

The literature mentions a series of weaknesses of the interview as a method of gathering information in counselling, elements which are especially evident if the counsellor is unprepared, inexperienced or works without supervision:

- interviews have poor prediction power regarding the subsequent performance of the client;
- interviewers only focus on a few aspects of the client’s past experience (2-3 competences);
- interviews are intuitive, and highly subjective (it can happen that various counsellors formulate significantly divergent conclusions even if following the same interviewing protocol); subjectivity is reduced with the counsellor’s experience and the structuring of the method.

The recruitment interview, alongside other evaluation methods employed by counsellors or consultants in human resources, remains one of the most popular selection instruments. Preparing for an interview is part of the career counselling process (and, more precisely, of the information stage), since the labour market tends to favour professionalism and competitiveness.

All these elements must be taken into account when an intake counselling session is being prepared. The supervisor's activity takes on special importance with beginners.

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Autobiography and Self-characterization

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History

For humanistic sciences, the „psychological thinking” in the writings of Saint Augustine (354-430) and Saint Thomas d`Aquino (1225-1274) is important, as it points out the conscience, the questioning, and the self/examination. Saint Augustine’s spiritual autobiography could be considered a real conscience examination, which confirms the very words of the wise man: „Do not search for truth outside; turn to yourself; the truth is within the inner human being”.

Theoretical background

Autobiography as expressing the meaning of the individuality in literature and humanistic sciences has a long history. Throughout times, the human beings have been interested in the personal representation of the world of their peers; as a result, the autobiography is one of the most popular forms of literature. Self-biographies appeared from the individuals` temptation to share their personal vision regarding life experiences.

The psychoanalytic approach emphasizes the role of autobiography in self-discovery, knowing that Freud „did everything in his power so that we could have the most complete disclosure.”(Jaccard, 2000).

Self-characterization is a proceeding for self-entering one's personal reality.

George Kelly (1955) proposes self-characterization as a technique for assessment of the construct system that describes the individual personality.

With personal construct psychology, Kelly has searched for an alternative to the determinist theory, specific to analysis and behaviourism, which characterized the American psychology school before the 50s. He considered the human being an active and proactive agent in his/her own life, capable to move towards change (so the person is the prisoner neither of his environment, nor of his past). The individual figures out in a personal manner the constructs through which he sees the world's events; creates his/her own ways of understanding the reality. The personal construct theory shows that the individual has power over personal change.

One of the principles of the personal construct psychology is that understanding of a person involves knowing his/her way of perceiving the world and manner of making decisions. Kelly sustain that in assisting the individual change process, the counsellor should, first of all, understand how the client built his/her own world, the concept behind it.

The data collecting methods used by Kelly aim to help counsellor develop in the beginning of the counselling process an accurate image about the most important interpersonal relationships or dominant characteristics of the client's world. Two of these methods are **repertory of constructs** and **written self-characterization**. Neither of them was considered a test, but a starting point for interpretation and guidance for undertaking a personal assessment of the change.

Self-characterization provides important data that could be analysed by breaking down the main themes. Self-characterization will comprise relevant information about the client's perception and world construction: the client describes himself/herself, the relationships, and the life context.

The Internet Encyclopaedia of Personal Construct Psychology presents self-characterization as a genuine qualitative method. Kelly aims to meet his first principle: „if you do not know what is wrong with somebody, ask him and, maybe, he will tell you” (Kelly, apud Ivey, 1980). The counsellor should not pay special attention to whether the personal individual's world vision is right or wrong, but he should focus on the way the client sees himself and his relationships with others. The information analysis is not focused on the percentage of positive/negative, pleasant / unpleasant statements, but on the simple listening of „the nature which reveals itself” in order to obtain the understanding of the other's system of personal constructs.

Self-characterization is recommended in the beginning of the counselling exchange. This method, combined with the unconditional acceptance, will support developing a trusting relationship between the counsellor and the client and ensure its sound continuation. Acceptance and respect are essential aspects in an atmosphere where the client feels safe enough to make further steps in exploring and improving his/her lifestyle.

Another theoretical approach fundamental for the self-characterization as self-exploration method is The Self Perception Theory – by Daryl Bem (1970); this theory is about the self-knowledge derived from observing our own behaviour, without any cognitive dissonance. Self-perception is expressed by objective self-assessment in given situations. This self-assessment is similar to a self-characterization.

The Greek researcher Athena Androutsopoulou (2001) presents the self-characterization as a narrative tool that could be used in individual and family counselling settings. She argues that Kelly's method (self-characterization) could help the story telling in therapy, and in this framework the self-description should become a narration in which the whole person is presented. Self-characterization is useful for the counsellor to recognize the „codes” and „personal and family themes”. The technique reveals the importance people place on negotiation, writing, and, finally, presentation of the way the self and the family are perceived and experienced at a particular time in their history.

Methods presentation

Autobiography is a retrospective longitudinal investigation by means of which the individual is encouraged to explore his/her personal experiences.

This method asks for the subject's cooperation in self-assessment and is based on the capacity to looking back to one's own actions, analysing them, expressing opinions about self, observing, and understanding the reactions of others.

Autobiography is considered an easy working method because the person is involved narrating, usually in writing, the important events for his own evolution. In the work coordinated by Holban there is a distinction between two types of autobiography: an official one – derived from collecting the official information about the identification data (date and place of birth, parents and family, school and life conditions) and one aimed at understanding the way the personality functions. The difference between these two autobiography types lies in the fact that the former has mainly an informative value, while the second mainly an interpretative value. For the counselling process both autobiographies are useful, but the latter is essential in general evaluation of the person, which happens in the first counselling sessions.

The official autobiography could be the base for approaching the young client by identifying the parameters relating to his/her family, school, and social environment, which reflect in how the personality develops further on (Holban, 1978).

As an investigation method, autobiography implies a trip of the subject in his/her own life in order to identify significant events. This process provides a framework where one could make connections between facts of life and the psychological structure; it also

offers possibilities for an interpretation of the personality development through the existing social relationships. The autobiography facilitates learning in the way the client makes sense of his/her life pathway, and the counsellor has the opportunity to identify the motivational patterns in the client's behaviour or the construct system through which the latter sees the world.

The method offers an image about the client's interpersonal relationships, adjustment to social groups, and adaptation to institutional settings. Thus we get access to information on the social dimension of the personality.

The way the client involves himself in the writing task could also be a sign for the counsellor of the personality he/she is observing.

Autobiography helps with evaluation / diagnose / interpretation of the client's personality; providing useful information for understanding the way the client organizes his/her life and acts in the world, and construct system on which he/she structures this world; all these map out the client's own universe, and an image of his/her own development in it.

Gison Gibson and Mitchell (1981) present the autobiography as a self-reporting technique, one of the most valued approaches that imply the active participation of the client. This technique facilitates understanding the strengths, weaknesses, and uniqueness of the person both by the counsellor and the client.

The autobiographic method is different from other techniques used in counselling because it gives the client the opportunity to describe one's own life as he/she lived it and currently sees it. This method also gives the client the space to express what he/she considers being important, to emphasize likes and dislikes, identify values, describe interests and aspirations, acknowledge success and failures, bring out the meaningful interpersonal relationships. The client discovers actions and influences that gave a sense to his/her life and that he/she could explain to others with no difficulty.

Autobiography is a „personal memory reconstruction“, „a shared mirror, interpreted subjectively“ derived from the reflection on the self and its development.

The autobiographic process could bring to the surface traumatic, misunderstood experiences, unresolved conflicts, which could stop client's evolution. At the same time, this method could support self-identity formation and even the cognitive development, because it involves the reconciliation and the coming together of all life stages, making possible to regaining coherence and rediscovering the meaning of existence.

Autobiography could explore any of the personal life dimensions (professional, artistic, cognitive, emotional) and the subject becomes more aware of each of these dimensions at the perceptive, emotional, and intellectual level.

The writing could be done with some indications regarding the choice of theme, the selection of an episode or a more important relationship, or considering the whole lifespan without pursuing a narrative pattern. This process describes a reversed way for searching new meanings in the personal path. The method is based on retrospection, as a

cognitive process of reorganizing the biographic material in order to point out significant parts of life.

Autobiography is successfully used in the counselling of the elderly and is considered to have a real therapeutic value because it promotes self-awareness, self-disclosure and the capacity of generating alternative interpretations for life experiences. (Botella, Feixas, 1992, *International Journal Ageing Human Development*).

The method could be considered a tool for facilitating awareness of the interpersonal relationships, and for understanding the day-to-day experiences by recognizing the importance of experiences lived.

Gibson and Mitchell (1981) suggest different ways of dealing with a client when the counsellor considers the autobiography necessary: he/she should be informed about the purpose and be assured that the process will be confidential. The counsellor shall provide some indications regarding the content of the autobiography or the general way of approaching it. He could suggest a guide for self-biographic writing. The authors present some modalities of analysing and interpreting the autobiographic outcome: the counsellor should make a list of all issues he/she considers relevant for the client's counselling needs; sometimes the counsellor could just summarise what he considers important.

The template for the autobiography analysis is the following (Kiley, *Personal and Interpersonal Appraisal Techniques*. Springfield, Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1975, apud Gibson, Mitchell, 1981):

- I. Significant incidents
- II. Organization – length, language (choice of vocabulary, depth of expression)
- III. Omissions, glossing over, inaccuracies
- IV. Points to check further
- V. Summary comments

Gison Gibson and Mitchell come forward with an innovative approach: the autobiographical tape (recommended for some clients, in some circumstances). The autobiographical tape offers to the client the opportunity to speak of his/her own life. The counsellor chooses this technique after an assessment, and decides if oral language is more appropriate than the written one. This type of autobiography is advantageous for persons who express themselves better orally than in writing; it allows the free presentation of details, which would otherwise be probably overlooked; it is less likely to be censored than a written sheet, and the verbal expressivity could give way to relevant information about the emotional impact of particular events.

The autobiographic process could be structured chronologically, or by criteria that facilitate retrospective analysis. Jigau (2001) presents some significant criteria for career counselling, such as education, vocational training, social context of the activity, personal achievements.

As a psychological investigation method, the autobiography is similar to recollection, conversation, and psychoanalysis, which are all retrospective analyses. Autobiography is different from biography by its subjective nature; the client is the one who narrates about his/her personal path, in writing.

Autobiography relates to self-characterization, too, the difference between them being that the latter is a transversal self-investigation.

Self-characterization is integrated in the methods category that favours the configuration of a close-to-reality portrait, from the client's point of view, useful in the counselling management; it represents the personal view, image of self.

Self-characterization is included among the methods that ask for the person's collaboration (Holban, 1972). The main feature of this method consists in bringing out information about the psychological individuality.

This method allows „the decoding of the individual formula” (Holban and Gugiuman, 1972) because it facilitates the access to knowledge not only of the personality characteristics (which are possible to be investigated by other methods), but also of the more personal issues (unapproachable by other methods).

Gison and Mitchell (1981) present the self-characterization like a method that implies client involvement and provides the counsellor information about the subject's self-image. The „portray” is a personal perspective about one's own personal „contents”, which is likely to be shared. Authors consider the self-characterization a non-standard human evaluation technique; the „non-standard” term shows that is a larger and more subjective approach to information collection and interpretation.

If the understanding capacity of the client is well developed, the likelihood of offering appropriate and efficient counselling services to meet the client's needs enhances.

Psait (apud Holban, 1978) describes three characteristics of the method from the perspective of information offered:

- the self-characterization as an information source about the personality structure and depth;
- self-characterization, as an information source about the subject's attitudes towards himself/herself;
- self-characterization, as an activity outcome.

Self-characterization could be considered a narrative method for describing the life events in a unique structure; it creates themes that give sense to this structure.

Self-characterization features (Holban, 1978):

- self-appreciation – the client evaluates his own capacities;
- subjective– the client describes one’s own personality, and is aware of the disclosure;
- transversal – the client presents detailed information about one’s own personality, accessible in this particular moment of his/her evolution.

Self-characterization respects the unity principle of cognition, being an entry point to person’s unity, so that the counsellor holds information about the client’s personal balance. The method offers valuable information regarding the cultural background, with which the counsellor could work on a qualitative interpretation of the personality development status. Through self-characterization, depending on the client’s availability of engaging self-disclosure, there are brought to surface information about the individual potential (physical, physiological, interpersonal, etc.), achievements (skills, routines, the work techniques), aspirations (personal project, goals).

Written content provides information about the client’s self-knowledge level and self-knowledge sources: feedback from others (parents, teachers, peers); the observation of one’s own behaviour (*The Self Perception Theory*, Bem, 1970) followed by definition of personal attitudes and feelings; comparison against others (aimed for self-evaluation and self-development). This content could be an information source regarding the subject’s personal agenda, cognitive structure, beliefs, preferences, and values hierarchy.

Knowing these attitudes will offer the counsellor an opportunity for discovering the specific directions to approach in order to obtain client’s cooperation. The content analysis allows the identification of key words and expressions; it allows also the identification of the personality traits visible at the behavioural level. Self-characterization will reveal the personal opinion regarding oneself; the self-esteem results from the self-evaluation of behaviours, intelligence, social success, and the evaluations done by others. The self-characterization could contain information about the attributions system (locus of control), personal beliefs, qualities appreciation, temper, pattern in social relationships, problem-solving and making-decision style, motivation, self-image (actual and desirable), risk-taking capacity, attitudes towards oneself, others, and work. Self-characterization is a framework where it could be revealed significant information about the client’s emotional development, affective maturity/immaturity mirrored in dependence or emotional control possibilities. This is information that will conduct to understanding one’s lifestyle and value system; all these will enhance the understanding level both for the counsellor and for the client himself.

The method is recommended in the preliminary counselling sessions, for enriching the knowledge base of the counsellor.

The counsellor will make qualitative interpretations in order to detect the relevant issues for the client’s personality, and history.

Self-characterization can be used in different stages, so that the counsellor will have a feedback at some time during the counselling process about the changes in the client's personality structure and in the self-perception.

According to the client's self-analysis availability, the self-characterization could bring forward relevant information about the psychological intricacies and a general look into the individual psychological reality (Psait, apud Holban, 1978).

Target population

Autobiography is recommended to be used especially with adults who have an easy way of expressing themselves (Holban, 1978). This retrospective investigation method is based on the individual capacity of up-dating the personal history and extracting the significant data for one's psychological evolution.

For child counselling, the method could be used as play exercise, with the child receiving some instructions to facilitate self-disclosure.

As an analysis method, self-characterization is recommended mainly with older students and adults. The method is useful in children counselling for personal development through practicing self-reflection.

Examples, case studies, exercises

General exercises

1. Do your own brief biography by discussing your personal values, aspirations, life experiences of decisions making.
2. Here are some guiding questions for autobiography:
 - What are some of my successful/unsuccessful life situations, areas?
 - Was hard to get success? If so, what extra-efforts I needed to make?
 - When have I been rewarded, and when have I been criticized?
 - How did I succeed in organizing my work, study, other activities?
 - What did others believe about my work style, my study? Have these opinions corresponded to my own? Who were this others?

- What was my attitude towards the authority? When and how was I able to make myself listened?
- How was I seeing myself then? How am I seeing myself now?

Exercises for child counselling

Mountains and valleys / drawing exercise (adapted from Shapiro, 1998)

Instructions: Draw a horizontal line that represents your life. At one end, write down your birth date and at the other the date of today. Draw „mountains” above the line for all nice, positive events in your life, and „valleys” under the line for the sad, ugly moments in your life. Try and remember as many events of both kinds as you can.

The counsellor could do qualitative interpretations.

Life quadrants

Fill in the quadrants with the required information. Describe in key words the issues in your life in each of these times.

My life 10 years ago	My life 5 years ago
My life now	My life 5 year from now

The periods could vary in terms of the client’s age and counselling purpose. This exercise allows the client a coherent image of the past-present-future, useful in career planning.

Example 1

Part I: My preschool years (my family, where I lived, early memories, friends, likes and dislikes).

Part II: My school years (elementary, grade school, high school, university, teachers, friends, subject matters, liked and disliked activities, significant events, experiences, travels, concerns, decisions).

Part III: My adult years (where I lived, work experiences, friends and family, travels, hobbies, continuing education, concerns, decisions).

Part IV: The current me.

Part V: My future plans.

Example 2

1. Significant people in my life.
2. Significant events and experiences in my life.
3. Significant places in my life.

Example 3

Start your autobiography as far back as you can remember – your earliest childhood memories.

As you write about the events you choose to retain, try and show how they affected the way you felt and act today.

Case study adapted from Gibson and Mitchell:

The subject is the fifth boy born in the family. Parents always let him know nothing he was doing was right or mattered. His nickname “Nobody” follows him through school, he is convinced that he’s not worthy of being remembered by teachers, classmates, etc. His older brother with a sense of humour adjusted the nickname into NB.

By this powerful statement, the counsellor understands the client’s withdrawn behaviour and poor self-esteem.

Example 4

Peter Madison (*Personality Development in College*, 1969) suggested this outline for an autobiography (www.mentalhelp.net):

1. *“General introduction: who are you, your family and your position in the family, important people in your life at this point.”*
2. *Early childhood memories: outstanding events without regard to order or connotation.*
3. *Childhood ideas or conceptions: things that concerned you when growing up, who are our real parents, how are babies made, what is death, what causes parents to drink or fight, what does it mean to “go to work”.*
4. *Your self-concept as a child: how you felt about yourself, abilities or weaknesses you assumed you had, how were the others towards you.*
5. *Significant others in your family of origin and present situation: general nature of the relationships, earliest memories of them, feelings for each other.*

6. *How you handled life's developmental crises?*
7. *Describe yourself from different perspectives: how do others see you (e.g. the opposite sex? Teachers and bosses? Peers?) What do you think you're really like? How would you like to be?*
8. *How you resemble and differ from your parents and other family members: physical, personality, attitudinal, values, and behavioural comparisons.*
9. *Family relations: a parallel of what were the relations between parents, siblings, you in the family of origin and what are your relationships today.*
10. *How do significant others see your future?*
11. *Sexual history: early memories, how you learned about sex, attitudes toward sex and toward sexes, temptations, good and bad experiences.*
12. *School and work history: parents', friends' and your attitudes towards school and career. How much of your time goes into work and how much into fun?*
13. *Friendships, loves, social life: early friends, your "gang", first love, sports, religious activities, co-workers, best friends, lovers, etc. What kinds of communities you live in?*
14. *Crises, regrets, top experiences: what would you have liked to happen differently in your life? What did you need that you didn't get?*
15. *Future changes in your life: major goals in 1-5-10-20 years. What self-improvements are needed to achieve those goals? Which self-help project should start first?*
16. *Reactions to writing the autobiography: before, during, and after the writing.*
17. *Realistic expectations: what is likely, not what you hope will happen in your life.*
18. *Life graph: draw your lifespan as you presented it; use symbols or key words."*

Methods evaluation

Advantages of Autobiography:

Autobiography gives us the client's image about his/her own life, helps us understand his/her representations system, offers valuable information about the cultural, ethnic, and social background.

Autobiography gives the client the opportunity to have an *insight* (possibility to interpret his/her own story); the client can discover new directions in hi/hers personality, re-configure attitudes towards oneself and towards significant people. The personal history narration experience, especially for adults, could be one of enriching the self-knowledge base, provoking self-reflection, stimulating action (Gibson and Mitchell, 1981), or relieve existential tension.

Disadvantages of Autobiography:

The autobiographical narration depends first of all on the client's self-expressing capacity and sincerity; it depends also on the possibilities of retrospective self-analysis and the availability to recognize and bring out in the present past experiences; moreover, it depends on one's capacity of giving realistic interpretations to all these experiences along the personality development process.

Conditions

Autobiography becomes valuable when the person has the availability for introspection and self-analysis, tracking the significant life events, and presenting openly his/her life. A trustful, unconditioned accepting relationship is necessary between the two parties.

The value of autobiography in the psychological investigation is conditioned by the context where the client carries on with the narration, general state of mind, mood and general health of that moment. At the same time, the quality of the autobiographical writing depends on the client's values that influence the present representations of the past experiences.

Advantages of Self-characterization:

Self-characterization creates the framework that allows the client to gain answers to questions about his/her own concept of life, self, worthiness.

The method makes available information about the person's psychological picture, self-image inaccessible otherwise to other investigation tools. Being used in different moments, this method could offer an image about the individual evolution, and therefore a more adequate counselling. By involving self-reflection, self-characterization is a personal development tool, providing the discovery and the awareness of personal resources, the clarification of difficult situation experienced.

Through self-characterization, the individual could develop his/her identity and sense of coherence that will allow sharing experience with others.

Disadvantages of the Self-characterization

Self-characterization depends on the self-analysis capacity and the personal information communication availability. The relevance of information varies with the sincerity of the client and the reliability of the counsellor.

This method builds on self-knowledge and requires „analysis capacity, a good self-esteem, realism, intuition, lucidity, introspection, correct use of self-assessment criteria, responsibility.”(Jigau, 2001).

Conditions of self-characterization:

- establishing a trustful relationship between the counsellor and the client;
- the client should know that the information provided will be properly used;
- creating a secure, trusting, accepting atmosphere that facilitates self-disclosure.

The method should be employed with apprehension and tact. The counsellor should be able to order the information received for the benefit of the counselling process.

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Computer-based Self-assessment

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History

Computerized application for psychological assessment have known three distinct phases: the conceptual and early research phase (from the beginning of the 20th century up to the World War II); the practical implementation of systems as a response to demand and direct need; the stage of development of open systems, which coincides with the expansion of the World Wide Web and the Internet.

The conceptual and early research stage. Psychologists' efforts to create technology that should diminish the cost of administering / interpreting psychological tests and questionnaires are present in the earliest phases of science. Clark Hull developed in 1928 a calculus machine that was capable of administering aptitude tests and extract career recommendations from the results obtained. Although the automatic data processing for vocational tests began as early as 1940, the widespread implementation of these ideas was only possible in the 1950s when electronic computers became largely available.

The practical system implementation begins after making substantial investment in the educational system in general, and career counselling systems in particular. *The American Research Institute* financed projects and initiatives in the field of counselling, which led as early as the 1970s to the development of software such as *SIGI* and *Discover*.

The World Wide Web and Internet stage has its debut in the 1970s and marks the entire contemporary period, defining a new generation of systems characterized by free access to information through computer networks all over the world.

Theoretical background

Computers are not in themselves a specific career counselling method, but merely an application of those counselling functions requiring algorithmic processing of information, complex calculus and routine operations that can be modelled and transposed through a logical programme (*software*), which uses various electronic multimedia resources / contents (such as text, hypertext, images, animation, sound), through certain equipment (*hardware* – the computer with its peripherals: camera, printer, keyboard, headsets, microphone, etc.). The development of computer-based counselling applications made *computer-based counselling a specific method*.

In career counselling, both self-knowledge and information on opportunities only make sense in the perspective of identifying the most efficient and satisfactory educational and professional progress. In order to make a good decision referring to one's future career, personal features must be in agreement with professional requirements.

Computer-based psycho-pedagogical tests and questionnaires are applications of the computer, which automatically measure intellectual capacity, knowledge or school results, interests, aptitudes, values or personality traits.

Computer-based applications in the field of psychological testing take on many forms function of the technology employed and the purpose of testing. According to the medium employed, we can make the following classification: *interactive Internet tests* or *stand-alone programmes*. By purpose of testing, we differentiate between *tests / questionnaires of interests, aptitudes, values, personality, etc.*

Various famous institutions such as *The American Psychological Association (APA)* and *The Association for Measurement and Assessment in Counselling and Development (AMECD)* have developed a series of *standards and principles of effective and responsible testing* for the main stages of the assessment process: *selecting the test, instruction, administration, data processing, and interpretation*. These could be summarized in the following principles:

- ensuring test reliability and validity;
- adapting to various client categories;
- respecting standard procedures of administration, processing and interpretation;
- adequate instruction in view of testing and interpretation;
- assistance and clarifications if necessary in any stage of test;
- control of testing environment and favourable climate.

Computer-based Test Interpretation (CBTI) in view of supporting career-related decision raises a series of ethical and professional problems (Sampson, 2000, 2003):

- applicability of current psychological testing / assessment standards on the Internet;
- rectitude in using computers for test interpretation in career counselling;
- integrating computer-based interpretation in career counselling;
- the necessary qualification to use the computer for test interpretation;
- confidentiality of the client data transmitted and stored;
- validity of interpretive information offered on the Internet;
- need for counsellor's intervention in case of clients requiring personalized assistance;
- inadequate training of practitioners and their dependency on computer-based interpretation;
- need to become aware of circumstances specific to the location of the client;
- accessibility of services to poor clients;
- ensuring optimal conditions in case of Internet testing (the presence of other people prevents the creation of a visual and auditory privacy necessary to the client in order to establish and maintain an efficient counselling relationship).

Method presentation

As Harris Bowlsbey (apud Bingham, 1991) shows, one of the counselling functions that can successfully be taken over in part by computers is psychological assessment.

Computer-based testing involves the following stages: selecting the adequate test, instructing the client, administering the instrument, data processing, and test interpretation.

Selecting the appropriate test. The ideal case is when the necessary tests are available on the Internet and validated for the target population. Practitioners first clarify their testing purpose and identify the adequate instruments, then proceed to test selection by *obtaining and using information* on the latter. For each instrument susceptible for use, counsellors must get information about technical qualities (reliability, validity, administration norms, interpretive resources, and adaptation to client categories), in accordance to which they will *choose the best version*. The Internet presents the advantage that information on available tests is always updated. In order to become aware of other practitioners'

experience in using an instrument on a certain client category, or of the adequacy of certain instruments for certain beneficiaries, counsellors may use *specialized discussion lists*.

Instruction for test completion. In order to ensure the validity of testing it is necessary for the person to be instructed so as to follow the standard administration procedure of the test. Instruction can be done *face-to-face* in case of a computer as a *resource*, or *at a distance* through *web* pages or other Internet technologies where counsellors, professional organizations or test developers offer information on various testing instruments.

Administration of tests. Once clients have been instructed on testing, one can proceed to the administration itself, either by *accessing password-protected self-testing websites* or by running resident applications (*stand-alone*) downloaded from the Internet or installed from a CD. Should any difficulties be encountered, clients may ask for help from counsellors by *e-mail*, *chat*, or *video-conference*.

Test administration on the Internet has the advantage of increasing the potential number of clients who have access to testing services, by removing barriers related to distance or difficulty of transport for the physically challenged (Sampson, 2000). In exchange, this assessment method reduces control over testing environments and may compromise standardization, for which “the *counsellors have the responsibility of making sure the testing environment and psychological climate favours high performance in a test and factors that may compromise testing are reckoned*” (AMECD, 1989, apud Sampson, 2000). The importance of following the standard administration test procedure and of providing a favourable climate may be heightened in instructions, but in absence of the counsellor there are no guarantees that these requirements are actually met.

Data Processing. In self-testing there is always the risk of confusion or of perception that “there are ‘magical’ answers... this is why it must be made clear how items determine the data scales and these latter the test interpretation... by special facilities of the program” (Ibid).

Test Interpretation. Sampson has enumerated a series of modalities by which the Internet can improve test interpretation: preparing the client for test interpretation, the general interpretation of the test, the interpretation of individual results, and supervising:

Preparing the client for test interpretation involves the presentation of repetitive information, operation which can be performed quite well by computer applications.

The general interpretation of the test consists in offering repetitive and time-consuming information that can affect the counsellor’s performance. Sampson identifies in this sense two negative effects on the client: “*client may not receive the information needed about the basic terminology used in a certain test and what the scales and total scores measure* (which makes the understanding and application of specific interpretative information even more difficult); *in case the counsellor looks bored when giving basic information to the client, the latter may blame himself for that and thus the counselling relationship is endangered*”. Even

if the basic information is communicated professionally, counsellors are left with less time to actually help clients understand the factors influencing their behaviour and integrate this understanding in a realistic personal change plan. The general interpretation of test results aided by computer *“helps clients be more prepared for the interpretation of individual results, by getting acquainted with terminology, basic concepts and nature of scoring”* (Sampson 1983). Transferring repetitive instruction and processing tasks to a computer, counsellors can focus on interpersonal support functions in understanding and application of test results in individual circumstances, on the ‘decoding’ of the interpretation in terms that are comprehensible for each client (Sampson, 2000).

Interpretation of individual test results involves automatic test interpretation, which increases the validity and reliability of testing, offering counsellors a wider and more consistent knowledge base for the interpretation of test results. The standardised nature of processing increases the consistency of interpretation, and the *“reports made by the computer tend to be more comprehensive and more objective avoiding the risk of distortion by subjectivism and prejudice.”* (Ibid).

A further advantage of computer-based interpretation is the possibility to adapt test interpretation by including multimedia resources pertaining to certain client categories. The programme allows presentation of interpretation by the face of a counsellor belonging to the subject’s reference group by selecting variables such as gender, age, nationality, etc. *“Keeping close to the client’s reference group helps the client relate and understand the person presenting the interpretation.”* (Sampson, 1990).

Integrating multimedia resources in test interpretation facility and adapting to various cognitive styles enhance the use for persons with limited reading abilities. Nevertheless, Internet resources rich in text, data, and that are highly structured make reading difficult. When counsellors deal with clients from remote areas and physically challenged who prefer to log in from home, a video-conference may be organized (scheduled by e-mail) in order to present and discuss test interpretation. (Sampson, 2000).

Supervising. „*The Internet allows the expansion of interaction both quantitatively, and qualitatively.*” (Casey, 1994, apud Sampson, 2000). Counsellors may communicate through *discussion groups, video-conference, e-mail, chat* not only with their clients, but also with experts in the field for supervision, interpretation of atypical test results, etc.

In order to avoid ethical problems in the Internet testing, Sampson suggests three areas of intervention: *awareness, attitude, and training.*

When Internet testing is used, counsellors must be aware of the potential problems that can occur and find adequate prevention solutions. Validity and confidentiality of the testing can be endangered, the counsellor’s intervention, providing counselling in remote

areas without sufficient information of the local context, limited Internet access, visual and auditory privacy in test administration and counselling.

Counsellors' attitudes towards using information technology in their activity vary from complete rejection to uncritical acceptance. The right approach would be "*cautious optimism implying that a counsellor sees Internet testing as potentially useful if valid testing websites are used by clients who have a certain level of support and counselling (from self-help to individual support services), appropriate to their needs*" (Sampson, 2000).

Aside from becoming aware of the potential problems and adopting the adequate attitude, counsellors must develop specific competences in Internet services that should prevent ethical issues, evaluate the validity and quality of the specialized websites they use or recommend, appreciate in each situation the level of support a client is in need of, be familiar with search engines and reference counselling websites that they can adequately integrate into their counselling.

Specific competences necessary for the use of the Internet include the following:

- web page development;
- navigating through forums;
- e-mail;
- supporting clients in searching information on counselling;
- applying legal regulations and ethical norms of Internet counselling services;
- understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Internet counselling;
- using the Internet to identify and access continuing training opportunities;
- evaluating the quality of the information to be found on the Internet.

Target population

The contemporary society requires the extension of study to one's lifetime in order to be able to keep up with the requirements of professions and the increased demand for counselling services from ever wider client categories. Although theoretically computer-based testing can be developed for almost all ages, there are certain limitations linked to the particularities of psychological development at certain ages, such as schoolchildren and elderly people. Another impediment is related to the hesitant attitude in front of computer applications of adults who have not benefited from computer education. The

widest applicability for computer-based testing / assessment is on pupils, undergraduate students, and active population.

As regards activity fields, a higher incidence can be noticed with people whose work demands dexterity, visual acuity and concentration (like drivers, pilots, military), pupils in the process of crystallization their vocational choice, young graduates about to enter employment, adults wishing to continue their studies or change jobs.

Examples, case studies, exercises

At present, in Romania there are some self-assessment computer programmes such as: InterOptions, The Occupation Guide and Cognitive Aptitude Psychological Test Battery.

InterOptions – *The occupation preference questionnaire (Romanian version of the Canadian questionnaire)* is a computer-based self-assessment application that can be used with counsellor assistance or individually.

The programme offers the following facilities (either of the two stages can come first, one automatically leading to the other):

1. Self-assessment of the client as regards professional preferences (*my fields of interest*) on a five-step scale (*does not suit me at all, does not suit me very well, undecided, suits me fairly well and suits me very well*) in five fields of interest:
 - *directive* – leadership, independence and initiative, with good results in supervision and project management;
 - *innovative* – inclined towards science, abstract matters, intellectual independence and creativity, with good results in experimentation, measurement, idea verification, research, mathematics;
 - *methodical* – likes systematic routine, detailed and neat work, following clear instructions, excels in technical occupations, desk work or the use of computer;
 - *objective* – prefers work with machines, processes, methods and data; realistic, consequential, organized, follows standard methods and processes, and excels in fields such as repair or constructions, work with objects, materials, machines and tools, equipment, technical instruments;
 - *social* – prefers direct or indirect contact with people, receptive to their needs and interests, preferring economic, social lines of work (assistance, aid, in the service of community).

Counsellors personally instruct their clients as regards the content of the five fields of interest and the self-assessment procedure, or refer them to the respective section in the program to go through self-assessment individually, finally clarifying and stressing the choice made.

2. Administration of *interest questionnaire* requesting answers to 50 questions investigating the consistency of the answers for the above five fields of interest; this section is performed individually.
3. *Personal profile of professional interests* and offers a comparative three-level graph (*low, average, high*) with results of the interest self-assessment. For each field of interest clients must compare the two scores, the program suggesting deeper reflection in case of major differences or confirming the self-image where scores are similar, at the same time reminding of the defining features of the five fields.
4. Personal report (*Your results*) including *the fields of interest* obtained, expressed under the form of a three-letter Holland code corresponding to the main fields of interest (e. g. *SOM* indicated as highest the *social* level, followed by a high level for *objective*, the lowest being *methodical*); alongside come a graph and a list of suggested occupations accessible through the Browse button that gives a *Brief presentation* of the three interests in the personal code, employment conditions, and hints as to the job and employers; the interests for each occupation include the option *Attach to my printed report*; clients can freely explore the list of occupations suggested or can request help from counsellor.
5. *Browse data base* allows the exploration of those occupations with an interest structure (code) different from the personal one; next to each occupation we have the option *review personal profile* for a pertinent comparison of the difference in interests. The search follows three criteria:
 - *Interest structure* allows selecting a different interest code, the implicit being the one identified in the questionnaire.
 - *Occupation* allows a search according to the name of occupation or key word, as well as listing all the occupations in the database.
 - *The NOC* four letter code (with subdivisions).

The interest questionnaire can be repeated to verify consistency of the results, and counsellors can offer clients the possibility of continuing the investigation of other occupations using the already identified interest code. It is recommended to follow clients' evolution and support them in the development of a personal career development plan. In the next counselling sessions, data on personal interests will be corroborated with information on aptitudes, social, family context, etc.

The utility of program consists in informing clients, clarifying their personal interest fields, as well as identifying possible career paths.

The programme is useful for secondary school pupils who do not yet have a clear professional option by offering them a series of suggestions, and for those who already have an option, by verify whether this is consistent with their profile or it is merely an unrealistic idea. For instance, in case of a student declaring his intention to enrol to the Polytechnic University but who has no idea about the faculties in the university and their specialization, the compilation of an interest profile exploiting the occupations recommended, corroborated with adequate information on faculties with the counsellor's help will offer the necessary information to express a more realistic and better-informed option.

BTPAC – (*Psychological Tests Battery for Cognitive Aptitudes*). The soft version of this battery is available online (Internet), and offline on a CD. The programme presents 23 tests, four of these requiring an operator. BTPAC tests are sampled for people aged between 12 and 50. The *soft* version of BTPAC allows the computerized comparison of the employee's aptitudes with those necessary in the desired profession according to the requirements in (The Classification of Occupations in Romania). For a list of tests and their description see the article "**Cognitive Aptitude Psychological Test Battery**".

For the tests administration the following are necessary: BTPAC handbook, a computer with the minimal technical features: *Hardware* Pentium I 166 MHz, memory 32 MB RAM, SVGA with a resolution of 800x600 pixels, sound, mouse, and for the *online* administration an Internet connection; *Software*: Windows 95, Internet Explorer 4.0 or Opera 6.0. After installing the program from a CD (75 Mb) the options are presented: *Create, Update, Print, Compare, Search and Copy profile, Update samples, Documentation, and Quit.*

For the soft administration, the counsellor will take the steps below:

- making sure beforehand that the subject is familiar with a computer, rested, the atmosphere quiet and stimulating;
- making sure the hardware and software requirements are met and the data displayed on the screen is correct (age being automatically computed from the date of birth, knowing that profiles specific to biological age);
- assisting clients in creating a profile using their real identification data;
- deciding on the testing version to be administered (long or short);
- presenting the subject the functions of the three buttons for the soft version;
- administrating the test respecting the instructions specified in the handbook without giving feedback throughout the testing;
- comparing the individual profile obtained (automatically) with the occupation profile;
- interpreting the profile and communicating the results to the examinee.

After obtaining the graph with personal profile, the client will access (under supervision) the option *Match occupations*. According to the clarity of career objectives a match level from 0 to 4 will be selected (0 for those occupations that correspond entirely to the aptitude profile, and 4 for the occupations up to four levels below the client's aptitude level). The program will offer a list of the most appropriate occupations (for 0) for individual aptitudes, with a detailed description of the major group, subgroup, education and qualification requirements, as well as a comparative profile of the aptitudes proved and the ones necessary for the occupation displayed. In the end it is possible to print out the results. In case the list automatically displayed by the program does not include the desired occupation, the client must select the option *Search profile* in the main menu, then *Major group* (e. g. *Specialists with intellectual and scientific occupations*), then *Major subgroup* (e.g. *Other specialists with intellectual and scientific occupations*), scroll down to the identification of the desired occupation (e.g. *press correspondent / journalist / artist*) with the specific aptitude profile, which will be compared to the personal profile displayed previously.

The soft version ensures the advantage of quick and easy processing of the results automatically by the computer and comparison of the individual profile with the profile for each occupation.

Psychological testing sites – in English (available on the Internet):

- **ATP – Association of Test Publishers** (<http://testpublishers.org>) is an NGO representing test and assessment instruments producers, other educational or employment services.
- **Canadian online counselling centre** (<http://www.therapyonline.ca>) offers counselling services, as well as information on the security, ethics and attractivity of online counselling.
- **CRESST – National Center for Research on Assessment, Standards and Student Testing** (<http://www.cse.ucla.edu/CRESSTHome.html>) offers information on alternative assessment.
- **ePsych** (<http://epsych.msstate.edu>) a psychology guide offering digital resources (java demonstrations, experiments and video clips).
- **ERIC – Testing and Assessment Resource Centre** (<http://www.ericae.net/>) represents a reference resource for psychological and educational testing and assessment offering novelties, publications and articles in the field. A useful instrument is the TLS – *Test Locator Service* realised in collaboration with ETS (*Educational Testing Service*), Buros Institute and Pro-Ed Publishing containing descriptions, and contact information of suppliers of over 10,000 psychological and educational measurement instruments. This can be accessed at: <http://buros.unl.edu/buros/jsp/search.jsp>.

- **ETS** – *Educational Testing Service* (<http://www.ets.org>) offers substantial information on computer-based testing (CBT – *Computer-Based Testing*). The section *Tests>Test Link* contains a database with descriptions of no less than 25,000 tests.
- **SDS** – *Self-Directed-Search* (<http://www.self-directed-search.com>) offers for a fee structured information on career. The testing session lasts 15 minutes and ends with a personalized report of 8-16 pages including a description of Holland personality types, personal Holland code, a list of occupations, fields of study and leisure activities matching personal interests, as well as recommendations for using the code in career planning.
- **FastTomato** – *Control your future!* (<http://www.fasttomato.com>) – online interactive career guidance and education service destined to adolescents, available for free for 10 days or thereafter for a charge. The site includes an *Interest questionnaire*, *Career suggestions*, *Course suggestions and locations*, and other instruments for careers education such as: *learning plan*, *target setting*, *development plan*, *personal assessment*. Moreover, there is a resource bank for counsellors and teachers.
- **The BUROS Institute** (<http://www.unl.edu/buros>) offers information on tests and contact information of test publishers. One can check the online catalogue and the subject index.
- **JPA** – *Journal of Psycho-educational Assessment* (www.pschoeducational.com) provides information on psychological and knowledge assessment, multicultural / dynamic / differential diagnosis, neuro-psychology, and psychometric characteristics of various instruments.
- **NCME** – *National Council on Measurement in Education* (<http://www.ncme.org>) is an organization setting out to encourage scientific progress in educational assessment, improve measurement instruments and administration procedures, processing, interpretation, and use. The site offers information on theories, techniques and instruments available for educational assessment as regards individual, institutional and social characteristics, on administration and interpretation procedures.
- **NIMH** – *National Institute of Mental Health* (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>) governmental organization coordinating and supporting mental health research.
- **Psychology from A to Z** (<http://www.a2zpsychology.com>) portal for information on research and development in the field of psychology all over the world, including online counselling.
- **QMARK** – *Question Mark Computing* (<http://www.qmark.com>) is an English *web site* on computer-based assessment offering tests, exams, tutorials and other Internet resources, links, as well as software for need

assessment, CBT – Computer-Based Testing, online questionnaires and testing material for the labour market.

- **Psychology Online** (<http://www.psyonline.nl/en-home.html>) gives information on intelligence, personality test, and psychological questionnaires.

Method assessment

Computer-based psychological testing *increases the effectiveness* of the process through its facile scoring, profile drawing narrative interpretative reports, test administration, design and presentation of multimedia elements for traditional paper-pencil tests, data processing, interpretative multimedia reports, communication, and connection to other resources. Computer-based psychological assessment also has the following **positive effects**:

- increase in the degree of use of software pertaining to academic aptitude, professional interest, value, personality and attitude assessment;
- adaptability of self-testing programs to the user's pace and self-image;
- immediate results;
- clients prefer computer-based activities (proven by various studies on subjects tested, even those unfamiliar with computers).

The use of computers in testing also comes with a series of **disadvantages** such as: risk of diminished confidentiality, validity and reliability, inadequate counsellor intervention, sometimes unavailable, limited access to Internet of certain clients, etc.

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Narration

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History

Narration was promoted in the 1950s as a method offering to researchers and managers the possibility of knowing and bettering from the inside the corporate culture. At the same time, the method targeted the identification of the expectations of a consistent social group represented by the white male worker predominantly involved in his professional role.

Currently, the North-American and more recently the European culture no longer give career the privileged status of lifelong commitment, as opposed to Japanese companies; now the search is for flexible people who should fulfil various and unexpected tasks and not workers loyal to a single type of activity throughout their active life. Careers are made up of “*selling individual services and competences to employers who have or want to achieve certain projects*” (Kalleberg, Reynolds, Marsden, apud Savikas, 2003). Negotiating each new professional project allows a series of adjustments in offers, demands, aims to achieve, remodelling the relation with production agents and the work environment, internalising recently acquired knowledge, enlarging the area of applicability of certain abilities, cultivating proactive development attitudes as well as becoming aware of the need for continual improvement.

The professional narration of a person receives different coordinates in the post-industrial era. Mobility is far more appreciated than stability, for it favours consecutive adaptations to the new requirements of global economy, enlargement of the specialization horizon, activating the formal / non-formal / informal / organizational learning resources, expressing oneself in as complex a way as possible through work and work-related creation.

Theoretical background

Narration may be simultaneously considered *method* and *product* of counselling sessions. It is in human's nature to relate what has happened, as a modality of presentation, self-revelation, assisted understanding and positive transformation. The clients' motivation to "narrate themselves" varies according to the personality type, from the need of validation by significant people, to the desire to create behavioural models in the group they belong or wish to belong to, the intention to stand out from the crowd, the temptation to shock by revelation, the tendency to infirm generality, up to the need of attracting support for an idea or justification for certain already installed feelings.

The theory of career development was constructed by Donald Super (1957) around the concept of vocational stages round an individual and generation. It is to be understood that each person goes through the consecutive cycles of *growth, exploration, affirmation, administration, quitting* on a continuum defining their career, irrespective of the economic, psychological or cultural conditioning. This theory functioned in the 1960s – 80s as an argument of a stage in the worldwide development of the world of work marked by the rise of common markets, the structuring of demand and offer at central level, national educational reforms, promoting equality in all the fields of social life. The vision of professional roles presupposes adapting to a complex of factors (qualification profile, availability dynamics work tasks, work time, etc.) that should satisfy the requirements of the system. The process begun in the 1990s of passing from an industrial economy to an economy based on information and advanced technology (Herr, 2003) demanded the transformation of the *career development theory*, so that it should now justify the multiple transition phases in the life of a person: from school to work, from a job to the next, from an occupation to the next; "professional cycles" can now be understood as mini-cycles or activities rebuilding each new career change. Human development has become the purpose and careers (work and relationships) the means of fulfilment. Narrative approaches favour the natural integration of work into personal life, rather than into a given job.

The stages of a career create the *vocational habitus* (Savickas, 2003), a common space where individual work experiences are integrated together with significances derived at the level of the community on the basis of which social and occupational structure is organized at a given time. Reciprocally, the *habitus* provides a code accepted to decipher the origin of personal significance in work experience and allows the transfer of personal significance to other individuals.

Career narrations of individuals from communities that are representative for a certain economy and culture of work make up a methodological frame which can be put to use in career counselling and guidance.

Method presentation

Career narration or career stories are the ensemble of events, experiences and human relations associated to the professional evolution of a person. Far from being a report / exposition / abstract, narration presupposes the *collaborative attitude* of the person to present to the counsellor or someone else the significant moments alongside the progress of the career and the emotional implications of these moments in a given social frame.

Clients and counsellors work together on a narrative structure based on *past experiences* and *real present competences* recounted by clients, at the end of which the *future socio-professional adaptation ways* are identified.

The topics encountered in narrations have nuclei characteristic for each individual, according to priorities, preferences, level of self-knowledge, verbalization capacities, sharpness in seizing the connections between constitutive sequences or decision-making characteristics. The links between facts, perceptions, factors and events can be done through **unstructured interview** (Savickas, 1995) or **decisional tree**. Counsellors trace the lifeline of a client from a certain moment to the next, agreed upon and justified as relevant to write a symbolic life story about. To this end, it is recommended to stimulate the evoking of episodes corresponding to the respective period and to describe role models in the client's narration. These stories often reveal, "vaguely structured" (Law, 2003) a *central problem* felt as negative and *an aim* constantly in view throughout one's life, sometimes under masked forms.

The obsession of losing all the time or investing precious resources in situations that do not guarantee success may be signs of psychotic deviation, lack of autonomy and self-adjustment or ill-meaning counselling. Professional interests may be seen as the bridge symbolically linking the *problem* (pictured in early stories) to the *solution* (pictured in role models). The preoccupation for a problem (e.g.: manipulating people, decisional independence, belonging to the elite) sometimes makes one's entire life be organized and lived in order to transform this preoccupation into reality, without ever reaching the level of awareness.

An experienced counsellor with good communication skills will detect the essential elements form a person's story and discuss the possible effects on the narrating subject, from a position of positive feedback.

According to Law (2003), the elements of narration are:

- Characters – identifiable through questions of the sort: *Who is involved? How do they influence each other? What feelings are exposed?*
 - Encounter
 - Attachment and separation
 - Feelings and tension
 - Predisposing events
- Circumstances – as answers to questions such as: *What are the values of people? What roles do they play? Who occupies what position? Who is from the inside / outside?*
 - The roles of characters in a certain context
 - Inter-correlated roles
 - Alternative selves in various situations
 - Cultural diversity of a role
- Discussion – led by questions of the type: *What do people think? What do they say? Who listens? Who is blocked?*
 - Learning
 - Culture
 - Change of opinion
 - Mismatch
- Events – revealed through the questions: *What is happening? Why? Whose version is more plausible? What else can be said? What is the importance of luck / chance?*
 - Luck and learning
 - Solving through explanations
 - Non-rational solutions
 - Resemblance with stories of others
- Significance – built by stimulating reflection on the questions: *Who can understand the meaning? Are there other points of view?*
 - Significance of facts
 - Significance of characters for other characters
 - Decisive moments / the essence of the narration
 - Multiple significance

Narrative counselling method encourages *life planning* according to the models that have proved functional or predisposing for a person and not according to the *vocational choice* pattern. Previous narrations are an argument for rewriting the coordinates of a new personal story, adapted to social and personal needs and putting to use higher significance of vocational stories and encounters. Amundson (2003) mentions communication skills in counselling among which we consider the following to be indispensable to the counsellor and used if and when narration is to be stimulated: paraphrase, clarification, empathy, summarizing, moderation, correlation, blocking, limiting, support, obtaining accord, provoking strengths, confrontation, self-revelation, observing coincidences.

Versions of narration: prose (journal, letter, report, dramatization), poetry, metaphor, (auto)biography. There are aspects difficult to seize in the client's narrative and that belong to meta-communication; a professional counsellor must discern from the tone, posture, look or pauses what are the potential intrigues (conflicts), premonitions, traps, flights of fancy, personal myths, human models to be put to use in the client's current condition. In a counselling session where they are required to talk about themselves and their life experiences, clients with an autonomous personality feel the satisfaction of being in control by deducing, correlating, selecting and interpreting the elements of the story; for a socially and emotionally immature client, narration may bring about the discomfort of evoking, wandering away from the reference system, mistrust in the virtues of the method. *Language* is important for a certain career development theory and equally *the significance* given to the story. Counsellors must identify the articulation mechanisms of the essential sequences, take over the key words in the client's communication and interpret them as action possibilities to help improve the situation.

Counsellors listen to clients' stories, but their duty is to explore other sources as well, such as stories of *significant people* or the *mass-media*. The newly created context of the story is meant to bring about arguments for events inexplicable in the past or under controversy, diminish or modify the impact at the time, and place the behaviour model in a new perspective.

Stories must be examined closely in order to lead to the identification of a pattern for vocational predisposition, as well as the creation of a constructive climate. Thus clients get the feeling that almost everything they have been saying matters and their experience has intrinsic worth for themselves and even for others. A discrete and efficient analysis procedure is using *secondary questions* (Amundson, 2003) by the following methodological stages:

- confirmation / denial – to understand how a certain situation has come about;
- sequences – to understand duration, evolution and perspective;

- opinion of others – to understand their perceptions of the subject at the heart of the matter;
- impact – to stir up alternative ideas, possibly followed by an action plan.

Other people's stories are relevant if they help strengthen self-confidence, affirm personal capacities and suggest positive directions.

"A good story is that in which what others did help you understand your own story" (Law, 2003).

The truth of a narration, more often than not, does not coincide with the factual truth, since the thread of the story is woven from consumed events which are remembered selectively, emotion of living and reliving, impressions of others, subsequent judgement, short and long-term effects. Various approaches to professional life facts are explicable by the significant impact on an individual in various moments of life and the gradual cherishing of the episode, with a particular role in conserving continuity and coherence in the face of present and future changes.

Target population

Narration is applicable in relation to various client categories. Since the communication skills is a prerequisite for the narration counselling, the method is especially addressed to the following groups of population:

- pupils or graduate in a moment of educational / professional decision-making;
- young people or adults who wish to change occupations;
- people who want and aspire to continuing professional development;
- people who can express themselves freely;
- people with a certain level of development of the operations of formal thinking (operating with symbols, elaborating and following reasoning, issuing judgements, introspective abilities, awareness of feelings and convictions).

Examples, case studies, exercises

Case study (from Savickas, 1995):

We have the case of a medical college graduate who did not feel comfortable or ready to make a career decision in the year of his graduation. The young man is seeking guidance for employment opportunities in the psychology sector.

The counsellor chose to use SDS (Self-Directed Search, Holland 1985), JVIS (Jackson Vocational Interest Survey, 1977), and WVI (Work Values Inventory, Super 1970) with the client for an objective and multi-faceted assessment.

The SDS brought up the following occupations in the page of vocational revelry (day-dreaming about work life): physicist, nurse, optician, salesman, and commercial airline pilot. Final SDS code: I-A-S.

The JVIS revealed high scores in the art of business, social sciences, personal services, family activities, medical services, independence and interpersonal trust, while low for academic performance and primary education, and even lower for teaching, social services, technical writing, desk work and supervision.

In the WVI test he scored high in altruism, independence, intellectual stimulation, context, and security; low in management, prestige, variety, creativity and related.

The reading of the results in the objective testing of values and interests matched with the client's hesitation to choose further studies, while at the same time opened the door to exploring the health and sales sectors.

The subjective assessment revealed two early memories:

- Being left in day-care by his working mother; having to sleep in a room full of children and not liking it at all; wondering whether his mother would actually come and take him home.
- Wearing glasses in school; being called one day in front of the class and having to clean his glasses; feeling the embarrassment.

Other notable outcomes of the subjective assessment were in the form of two role models:

- Superman, the flying hero; he did not display his feelings, but clearly had a sense of humour. He let others express.
- The team of five in a science-fiction short story. His favourite personage used toys to stop the bad guys in their evil plans.

The counsellor derived that **independence** and **individuality** are important to the client; at the same time, that he enjoys **being part of a team**; he makes a point by expressing his individuality without the underlying feelings. The discomfort around school and teachers is present to this day. The dirty glasses lesson urges him to always be clean and presentable.

In weaving the story, the counsellor concluded that the client's life project evolves around independence and self-revelation, but these are features to display only in a closely united group or team of people, where science is the main tool to problem solving. His role in such a team would be to offer moral support through his sense of humour, remain rational, and use mechanisms. The client made it through the college thanks to a group of friends. From the discussion it became apparent that the reason he hesitates to practice medicine is that he has hard times accepting an external authority, and that he cannot handle prolonged years of study. He wanted to be part of a team that should solve problems employing science and appreciate individual contributions of its members.

The client decided to further explore three occupations in the realm of human medicine (anaesthesiologist, optometrist, and pharmacist), which meet his core requirements: allow him to be part of a team, and use scientific means.

In order to deal with the client's tendency of relying on others (mates and mother) in decision-related matters, the counsellor drew a line between the role models identified earlier and the client's effort to be independent, backed by his acknowledged interest in becoming a pilot. It was even suggested that the young man should take flying lessons on a small aircraft, as a hobby.

Method assessment

Advantages:

- narration is a possibility to go back in the past and salvage values and convictions occasioned by events in one's history. On the basis of accumulated life experience it becomes thus possible to transfer significance from the stories of others, from different ages and contexts to one's current situation. Understanding the cultural, professional, social mechanisms that determined certain experiences prepare qualitatively the leap to a superior plan, that of action. Work is a complex activity offering multiple personal and professional development opportunities; career counselling uses narration as an instrument to cultivate diversity and put to use chances in a possible future;
- stories are not remembering, but reconstructions of the past, so that the events once lived support current choices and favour future evolutions;
- once rationally and affectively engaged in narration, the clients clarify their options and exercise their decision-making skills, to an extent to which they are prepared. This is a subjective practice for autonomy and maturity, but also with the feeling that no experience (of one's self or borrowed) is foreign to man;

- through narration, life facts step out of their anonymity of chance and become endowed with unique contextual and individual significance in a network of characters, contexts and reciprocal effects;
- narration contributes to reduction of intra-personal and/or group conflicts and the solving of uncertainties;
- client is encouraged in speaking explicitly of personal ambitions and aims, without having remorse about the morality of the discourse;
- personal identity benefits from a central place in the wider preoccupation with developing an autonomous, creative personality, satisfied with its performance in the world. Identity in relation to the situation and other significant people is built through the vision of the narrator;
- client willingly operates with successive choices in order to identify a relevant, motivating story with personal development potential.

Disadvantages:

- there can be situations where a story has negative effects on the narrator; here the counsellor must intervene that is interrupt or adjust the helping relationship;
- it may happen that a client should endlessly focus on an array of negative experiences considered symptomatic and predisposing. Certainly, it is not out of the question that these events should be real, but the image can hardly be as simplistic or the interpretation one-sided. The counsellor must propose a more balanced approach, wider perspectives, varied reference systems and positive feedback;
- the past is assimilated to a resource at the hand of the present and under the control of the future. The counsellor must be able to ensure the ethical integrity of the process and that of the client, to put life experiences to use for the continual improvement of the client's chances to find personal fulfilment in or through work.

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Critical Incident

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History

At origins, the critical incident speaks of an individual reflection upon a gap in one's own background and thus belongs to the family of methods that also includes biography, journal, letter or portfolio. While is worthy of being written down for a person, it *may not be* and most often it *is not considered so* by other people. Even the same reference person, if invited to classify certain events in his / her private or professional life at different times and according to different criteria, will probably not be consistent in the designation of all the critical incidents experienced. It is certain that as we become aware of the nature and depth of the critical incident, we activate the most appropriate intervention resources in the given situation, leaving room at the same time for specific creativity.

The collection of critical incidents under no circumstances follows a certain pattern; it is peculiar to the personal narration style of any person who has chosen this manner of evoking, liberating, sharing. The access to the information contained in personal notes is only possible with the author's permission, for it is a concentrated or short form of experiential intimacy. Copyright is also valid here, since it expresses the right of intellectual property over the significance given to stages of personal portfolio.

The autobiographic meaning of an "incident" is normal or natural event, and the "critical" attribute is given by the fact that it bears personal thought and behaviour values and models in response – prompt or delayed – to a situational stimulus.

In an inter-personal sense, a critical incident is the revelation of a significant moment, a turning point in the life of a person, group or community. The act involves from the very

beginning the author's intention to make the respective fact known. The purpose of making public certain fragments of critical incident or a collection of them is the transformation of one's own experiences into flashlights for the professional community, raising awareness about the cognitive dissonance, and adaptation of the intervention forms to the new developments in counselling.

Before recently, critical incidents belonged to naturalistic research, such as ethnography and anthropology. Only in the second half of the 20th century did C. Wright Mills, American sociologist, promote the method of the reflexive file, which he called "investigation file" due to the fact that it was organized thematically and not chronologically. The method is still applicable in education, where the *significance of what is happening* is for teachers more important than *when it did*. Moreover, the conceptualisation effort of creating the data and the analysis of the opportunities offered by a critical incident exceeds the range of basic educational competence.

The critical incident is a qualitative research method in psychological counselling, put forth by Flanagan (1954). For many years now, the German federal employment agency – Bundesagentur für Arbeit, through the University of Mannheim – has been integrating the incident technique in the methodology of counsellors' training.

Theoretical background

In any field of activity can occur a sum of situations that have not been foreseen in the initial training. Even less predictable is the training as regards to the qualitative research in counselling and guidance – where each case is unique through the input of the problem, the specificity of personalities involved, the context, the perceived measure of success – the novel situations are what give the particular note of professional ability and competence.

Clients and counsellors placed for starters in typical situations will be able to define "critical incidents" as moments in which their basic qualification does not offer enough leverage to solve the given case.

For experienced counsellors in a "critical incident", the next move recommended according to the current knowledge, aptitude, and capacity would limit the options, either unfavourable in the long run, either not based on realistic resources. The critical incident technique is the constructive approach to the apparent conflict between a concrete demand expressed in the counselling case and the limited possibility of meeting it. This is the meaning promoted in the present work.

In fact, the specialists discovering a breach in their own professional knowledge or experience are applying to themselves the teaching method of problem posing. This autogenic experiment keeps its formative value on the condition that the element of

novelty should not inhibit the search potential, or overshadow the good results obtained so far, however stimulate the need for professional improvement.

On the Internet we learn that in Canada and the US there is the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists (ATSS), organization addressed to professionals exposed to the traumatic stress caused by the contact with clients involved in crime, aggression of any kind, war, terrorist confrontation, natural disasters, etc. ATSS places at the hand of “front desk” staff and executive staff a complete stress management course built around critical incidents. The course is formed by two theoretical modules and ends with a written examination and a role-play, sustained at latest three years after the beginning of the program. The certificate obtained qualifies the holder to provide optimised assistance services for the victims of critical incidents and at the same time protection of the own emotional health while confronted with human drama under its various forms.

Critical incidents, as defined in the medical literature, speak of a situation that causes unusual reactions to the intervention that could affect the capacity for an adequate response. Support programs in stress management aim at maintaining a good physical condition, attracting support from family and friends, building a collaborative relationship with the co-workers, as well as handling the post-traumatic cure.

Counselling works in situations manageable from the point of view of human condition, where the quality of life and comfort level brought by settling the incident is crucial for the general welfare of the client, apart from pure survival.

Since most counsellors in the Romanian educational system work in school offices and classrooms, we bring to attention the teaching perspective on critical incident (Corsini and Howard): an approach to crisis casuistic, “difficult interpersonal situation in the classroom” that can occur with *“experienced teachers, administrators or parents unsure regarding the most appropriate course of action or educational reaction”*.

Associating emotional discomfort to the uncertainty caused by the disturbing fact of life outlines the magnitude that the same critical incident may get for individual agents involved. Ultimately, the inclusion by the practitioner of a situation in the irreconcilable category of those for which he/she has no abilities or external validity at a given time, overwhelmingly depends on his / her capacity to make useful connections and transfer expertise from usual to less usual cases, from literature to methodology, from the possible to the likely, from his / her own portfolio to that of the others and the other way around. The time elapsed from the usual to the critical incidents is one of professional accumulation and refinement.

Method description

Vocational phenomenology is hard to seize in formal reports. When practitioners must write down the experiences that made them reflect on a concept or idea, it becomes

essential, more than the fact itself, the range of details used in description. There are no failed beginnings or erroneous directions, since all the details perceived by a narrator have a potential of explaining disposition, understanding and relative intervention.

There are several types of critical incidents analysis, according to the picture put together by Tripp (1993). The methodological chains, an ad-hoc formula can be found to direct the writing or commenting on more or less all-critical incidents.

Judgement type	Analysis type		
	Necessary information	Questions that can be asked	People involved
<i>Practical</i>	Procedural	What should I do? How? When?	For whom? With whom?
<i>Diagnostic</i>	Descriptive	What happened?	Who was involved?
	Causal	What caused this to happen?	Who acted?
	Effect	What does it produce? What does it generate?	For whom?
	Affective	How does it feel?	By whom?
	Semantic	What does it mean?	For whom?
	Explanatory	What happened?	With whom?
<i>Reflexive</i>	Personal	Do I like it?	Do others like it?
	Evaluative	Is it a good thing?	For whom?
	Validated	Why?	Who is involved?
<i>Critical</i>	Classified	What makes it for a good example?	Whose classification?
	Social	Is it fair?	For whom?

We find a form proposal and at the same time interview guide for composing critical incidents with Ertelt and Schulz (1997), adapted from Sue and Sue, with priority designed for multicultural counselling.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe a counselling situation you went through yourself and you consider relevant. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How did it come about? b) What had actually happened? (place, time, circumstances) c) What people were involved? d) In what did the events consist and in what order did they occur? 2. What people belonging to an ethnic group or various cultures were involved and what relationships did they develop with the others? 3. Describe in detail the counsellor's attitude and the way he/she approached the situation. 4. What particular problems, difficulties or other aspects came up in the meantime? 5. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How did the counsellor react to the situation described under 4)? b) How do you think the counsellor should have reacted? 6. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What was the result of the situation? b) What problems remained unsolved?

Using this chart as a starting point, the clients have an opportunity to present their own goals, the actions undertaken for their achievement, the degree of achievement after one

or more sessions, under the form of role-play in micro-counselling or in the analysis of cognitive manifestations.

According to the source, critical incidents are divided into the following typological variants:

- autobiographical incidents (the most frequent);
- incidents derived from other people's experience, or narrated.

Autobiographical incidents can be divided, *according to the level of depth*, into:

- incidents that are easy to remember and relate, despite the long time elapsed from the moment of occurrence. The characteristics that justify them being stored are the special emotional load and/or permanence of their technical relevance (such as personal solutions to apply in case of professional doubt);
- incidents forgotten instantaneously because of their superficiality, or because of the mental prejudice they would bring if kept at the conscious level.

Drawing their inspiration from the traditional education system, Corsini and Howard recommend that teachers get used to the critical incident technique through a four-entry protocol:

- I. Read a report of critical incident and try to formulate answers to the questions below before reading the comments of the subject / publisher:
 - a. Describe the problem presented by the subject, by facts and perceptions.
 - b. How would you react in such a situation, with your current knowledge?
 - c. How does the subject see the problem?
 - d. Compare your analysis with that of the subject. What is your understanding of the teacher's role and of the psychological and/or philosophical guidance? If they are different from those of the subject, say in what way.
- II. Go through the comments made by consultants and then express your opinion on the following aspects:
 - a. How does each of the consultants see the problem¹?
 - b. What frame of reference does each consultant have (being aware of their psychological and/or philosophical guidance, their conception of the teacher's role and the aims of the school)?
 - c. What common declarations are there in the analyses of the two or more consultants?

¹ Authors denominate by „consultants” the specialists who are engaged by an institution to solve the case.

d. What differences are there between the consultants' comments?

III. In light of this information, redo your initial analysis under I.

IV. Make a correlation between what you have learnt from the case and essential pedagogic issues such as: discipline, assessment of learning progress, emotional adaptation of pupils, levels of pupils' preparedness for school, the role of counsellors and other special services, teaching and professional ethics.

In his interpretation of critical incidents, Tripp (1993) suggests considering methodological aspects meant to orient a practitioner towards appreciating several qualitative variants:

1. **Choosing the thinking strategy.** The reference perspective on the case is given by the automatic or oriented use of one or more strategies² of the kind:
 - a. *Non-events*: help understand the importance of events and become aware of the reasons for which other events failed to take place. This strategy contributes to bring balance between achievements and what needs to be done, with a constructive tension towards what must be obtained in the short and mid term.
 - b. *Plus, minus, interesting*: there are positive and negative aspects in all situations, and sometimes we only see the aspects that are relevant under the circumstances or for a certain person. In any critical incident the subject's or narrator's general position, his/her system of reference and set of values become evident.
 - c. *Alternatives, possibilities, and choices*: giving credit to individual options, with their consequences and means of carrying them out. It is recommendable to provoke lateral thinking when in a critical incident, so that we not ignore favourable openings due to the general trend of opinion.
 - d. *Another point of view*: deliberately look for other points of view, especially of people involved and who did not take part directly, but are familiar with the actors and/or the fact itself. The contribution, be it adjacent, of significant or experienced people is not to be neglected.
 - e. *Parts and qualities*: we can see any fact of life as a sum of parts (rational structural and relational approach).
 - f. *Reversal*: if we manage to think of the opposite or the converse of the situation we can reach the configuration of alternatives worth

² The strategies enumerated under the points b and g have been inspired by De Bono (1987) CoRT Thinking. In: Tripp (1993), p. 44-46.

considering. This strategy invites to a proactive and creative attitude regarding the state of facts.

- g. *Omission*: verifying the way the case is presented for the others is useful in identifying the elements that can contribute to its completeness.
2. **Provoking the handiest causal explanation.** It is recommended to consecutively explore the reasons leading to the critical incident, step by step, with the help of questions such as "Why? In what way is this important?". The social construct of the opinion is subservient to the perspective change, as our convictions or interests dictate.
3. **Dilemma of identification.** Once we have admitted to what puts us in professional difficulty, we can take the necessary measures to better the situation. Moreover, it is important to become aware whether there is a personal limit or one inherent to the situation.
4. **Personal theory.** The ensemble of values and judgements formed in time through education and experience – here called "personal theory" – influences the way we perceive and act when facing critical incidents. This is why the competence of a practitioner must not only be assessed by involvement in isolated case, but especially by his/her consistent conduct in extreme situations, self-command, and work style with the client.

Target population

At first sight, the critical incident technique is mainly addressed to a reflexive practitioner, who identifies the incident in his/her activity (teaching, counselling, etc.) and decides to present the characteristic elements of the case in the professional community, usually in periodic publications or conferences.

On a closer analysis, making public the critical incidents has formative value both for the person involved and for the peers in the same or related specialties. The benefits of taking action in revealing the critical incidents can be:

- sharing the dilemma to attract constructive comments and observations from peers and thus enrich the approach;
- perpetuation of a critical incident challenge in the view of stirring correct solutions;
- signalling an extreme situation for which there are no verified solutions;

- attracting creative energies from other fields for innovative solutions adapted to the case.

Examples, case studies³, exercises

Description of the situation

The client is an 8-year-old boy, in the first grade, with hyperactive behaviour. He comes for counselling with his mother, who is worried that her son finds school tasks overwhelming. The difficulty arose during the first session. The counsellor could not have the session as proposed due to the constant display of nervousness by the boy. This caused professional discomfort, in addition to which the room was not suited to counselling (they were in an office and the child was attracted to everything in the room: computer, video recorder, TV, books, tape recorder, etc.). The mother was also there in this first session and she was permanently tempted to scold her son and threaten him to punish unless he behaved. In short, the counsellor could not establish a direct contact / exchange with the child.

The counsellor's attitude and the approach to the problem

For starters, the counsellor decided to accompany the client in his "exploration" of the office environment, trying to make him talk about the object(s) of his attention. This "exploration" lasted an hour (standard time allocated to one counselling session).

Particular problems

The counsellor keenly felt the lack of adequate space for counselling, as well as her lack of training as regards to the counselling of hyperactive children. In addition, she remarked that the mother's presence was an obstacle in the way of establishing a direct relationship with the child.

The counsellor's reaction to the problems

At the end of the meeting, the counsellor agreed with the mother on an intervention plan, raising the necessity of counselling the mother. The child was also assigned a task: draw a picture on a given topic until the next session.

The results obtained and problems unsolved

A concrete and clear intervention plan was set in place. The mother received advice on how to motivate the child for school tasks, phasing things out. The need of information (for the counsellor) on the most adequate counselling technique with hyperactive and hyper-kinetic children arose. There still remained to be found a more adequate space in school for the counselling office.

³ Case study taken presented in the Euroguidance meeting with the coordinators of local centres of psycho-pedagogical assistance, 11 October 2002, by Mrs. Adina Ignat, school counsellor in Suceava.

Method assessment

Advantages:

- systematisation of the counsellor case load and of the conceptual and methodological structure meant to articulate the essential elements for the optimal solution of the case studies;
- encouragement to write down flashes of professional experience, which requires a deeper analysis of the facts and more objectivity than we can afford when we are in the midst of things happening. At the same time, it increases the probability that the practitioner accepts the peers' opinions after a thorough reflective judgement;
- sharing professional practice once the case has been closed or requesting help in cases of operational impasse;
- awareness of counsellor's concept of professional self, by making evident certain constants of his/her position, action, interpretation of critical incidents experienced;
- influence on professional behaviour of opinions and judgements expressed by peers;
- making use of the opportunity to express professional dilemmas and methodological reflection;
- enrichment of the personal portfolio with local elements;
- flexibility of presentation, as narrative or schema;
- investigative attitude and perseverance in contact with difficult cases currently under work or on the waiting list;
- use of past experiences and learnt lessons in the view of preparing for present and future confrontations;
- the possibility to mark a symptomatic incident in one's own case load or inspiring those that will come into contact with the presentation of the incident;
- the value of critical incidents as illustrations of variety accumulated in time, even if with a limited prognostic role, is that it brings confirmation to the counsellor and allows him/her validation of beneficial action;
- the possibility to subsequently approach the same type of even in a different manner, knowing by now where and why a critical point would occur and how to treat it alternatively.

Disadvantages:

- does not define the gravity of the incidents. From incident to conflict and crisis, here is a range of possibilities equally assumed in the portfolio of this technique;
- since the method takes into account isolated incidents, no general conclusion or recommendation can be formulated for other than the practitioner involved;
- each case must be brought to the ideological reference framework of the people involved, most often of various or antagonistic natures. Not all that is permitted and encouraged in a school of thinking will uniformly be taken up by all its adepts, let alone by the members of other ideological blocks;
- the practitioner's habit to relate to the incident in a certain way (according to training and "personal theory") may not call upon itself the general appreciation of the community of counsellors and, therefore, the counsellor in question can be discredited or marginalized;
- intervention in non-typical situations are strongly contextualised and the transfer of solutions between people and situations is rarely possible;
- there is no guarantee that there will be an answer to all the questions in the critical incident protocol.

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Observation

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History

The need to understand and make predictions regarding the behaviour of people has always been alive in history for both personal and social purposes.

Introspection (self-observation) is a form of observation and supervision of one's own person and conscience. The method was especially promoted in the dawn of psychology, considering the psyche a “*circle of phenomena springing from themselves with no determinative connection to the outside*” (Zlate, 1996). Introspectionists place the study of conscious phenomena at the centre of psychology, calling them *the psychology of conscience*. In Wundt's (1879) conception, internal phenomena may be understood by relating causes and observable effects. For instance, studying reaction speed can yield reasoning on temperament and mental state.

Behaviourism (the theory or science of behaviour) – arose in the beginning of the 20th century, being founded by the American psychologist Watson as a response to experimental introspectionism. In essence, the author describes behaviour as “*the whole of responses adjusted to the stimuli triggering them*”, which allows its interpretation (Zlate, 1996). Watson believed the observation and description of behaviour were sufficient to predict and control it. Behaviourists considered behaviour to be the only one that can be studied objectively, observed, measured, and quantified. For instance, visual images are nothing but muscular tension of the eyes; representations are remembrances of kinetic sensations that once accompanied the perception of the object.

Humanistic psychology was initially outlined by the activity and opinions of psychologists such as Maslow, Rogers, Buhler, etc. regarding the analysis and study of complex characteristics of human nature. In short, this current in psychology is based on

understanding and interpretation of the significances of situational behaviour (aims, motives, specificity and uniqueness of social events) from the perspective of the social subject. Such an interpretive approach involves empathy and intuition.

Theoretical background

The method was put to use *in the natural sciences* by Claude Bernard, who affirms that “observation” states a fact with the help of investigation and then studies the data obtained. The observer is a “photographer” of fact and the observation must exactly copy the nature of the phenomenon. According to Bernard, “*the observer listens to nature and writes to its dictation.*” (apud Zlate, 1996).

In the field of *psychometrics*, Galton was the first to propose that the standards of experimentation should be directly applied to the study of behaviour types. The author recommended this method to educators in order to measure in their pupils the quality of learning and the frequency of correct answers, initiating what we call today “behavioural tests”.

The model of observation from physics and natural sciences was transferred to *sociology* by Emile Durkheim, who considered facts “*ways of acting, thinking, feeling, external to a person and endowed with power of coercion*” (Lallement, 1993).

The specificity of observation in *psychology* stems from the hypotheses the “subject” has. Piaget in 1970 made the distinction between the epistemic subject (the self as agent of scientific research and observation) and the egocentric subject (the self in its individuality as body, subjectivity).

In *social and human sciences* observation represents the relation between two people who “*realize*” and act accordingly. Kohn and Negre (1991) considered that the term observation designates an initial stage of knowledge (exploration phase), a type of action taken by the observer (systematic collection of data), and a stage of information interpretation.

Method presentation

The act of observation in career counselling consists in the intentional, methodical and systematic study of subjects, of their mental manifestations, in their natural development, and the faithful recording of significant psychological facts considered essential in career counselling.

Observation method is the only one “*employed in any research*”, sometimes by itself, at times accompanied by others: experiments, tests, questionnaires, etc. (Șchiopu, 1997). The investigation and psycho-diagnosis strategy is, after all, a concentrated form and one transposed in items and challenging situations – on a certain topic – of a systematic and deep observation.

The term “*observation*” (Lat. *observatio*, Engl. *observation*, Germ. *Beobachten*) has multiple meanings (empirical research, spying, first stage of fieldwork, watching, supervising, keeping an eye on, etc.). According to the field under study, observation can have various meanings.

In *everyday language*, observation is knowledge, examination of an object or process, stating and remarking (critically) on what has been carefully watched or looked at (The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, 1998).

In *psychology*, observation is “*the most usual and spontaneous reaction involved in the active process of adapting to the situational circumstances of reality*” (Șchiopu, 1997).

In *sociology*, observation constitutes the “*contact with the real world*”, according to Herseni (1969, apud Chelcea, 2001).

In *pedagogy*, “to observe” means to enter “*the universe of knowledge of a child or young person*” (Neacșu, 2001), by means of exploring reality under multiple aspects: systematic (spontaneous and un-organized), enumerative, descriptive, observation as an experiment, etc.

The numerous observations made during classes (in contexts of learning, social interaction and knowledge, affective reactions to educators, colleagues, or contents of knowledge, etc.) highlight the necessity of correlating / integrating them into a unitary and coherent form.

Observation forms can be classified according to various *criteria*, such as:

Guidance of the observation act: **self-observation** (process oriented towards identification of the particularities in one’s own behaviour); **observation as such** (oriented to seizing the behavioural manifestations of others).

Implication or non-implication of the counsellor: “**passive / external**” (without direct involvement of the counsellor in observation); **participatory** (the counsellor becomes a member and participates in the activity carried out by the person or the group observed).

The structuring of observation: **structured (quantitative)**, which involves following a chart of pre-established behavioural categories, and the observation act consists in classifying the empirical material according to those categories, and **unstructured (qualitative)**, which involves study from the “inside”, over a longer period of time,

without any pre-established category or aiming to defining one at the end of the observation process. This latter type of observation offers of complex and integral explanations and descriptions on the facts under observation.

Degree of intentionality: **spontaneous observation**, which refers to the data noticed currently, and **intentional observation** aiming to systematically understand a phenomenon or situation.

Observation in various stages of the counselling process

Observation of behaviour during role-play: subjects are put into a simulative situation. At any time every person is in a certain mental state, under the impression of an emotion. This emotion usually has an equivalent in bodily elements: body posture, a look, hand movements, etc.; all these elements, apparently isolated, then allow the description of a person's general behaviour at a given time.

Observation during problem solving: Guillaumin (1965) states that the importance of the method and the content of observation facts are increased during a psychological examination or a task. Subjects solving a problem allow us to answer both the question "How much?", and "How?" with regard to the result obtained. The answer to these questions is possible by systematic observation during the task, as well as by focusing on specific aspects of personality: attitudes during the examination, uncontrolled gestures, exclamations and words used, difficulties of understanding, etc. (Dafinoiu, 2002).

Observation of behaviour during communication: Mucchielli (1974) is of the opinion that observing the clients involves three points of reference for the counsellor:

- noting the attitude and behaviour;
- seizing the context of the behaviour;
- availability for intellectual sympathy with the human subject (Dafinoiu, 2002).

"The three fundamental aspects of observation (attention given to behaviour, contextual analysis of behaviour observed, empathy) are regrouped to make up what we call the psychological sense imposed on observers in any scientific position held" (Zlate, 1996).

The correspondence between *active listening*, *participation*, *feedback*, and *empathy* in observation and counselling at a large enhances the opening and the active involvement of subject and favours communication, saving time and energy. Active listening involves careful observation and the maximum use of information offered by para-verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the subject.

Emotional experiences of the subject in the counselling relationship and his/her affective reactions enhance an in-depth understanding of complex (and sometimes contradictory) feelings triggered by a situation, person or event. This deeper type of empathy involves

observation of the intentions the subject is rarely aware of (Rogers, 1989). The subject can speak with relative ease about objective elements of self (name, address, etc.), but not as easily about emotions. In an empathic answer model, subjects recognize themselves almost immediately by using the words “yes, *this is what I meant.*”

What do we observe during counselling?

- Knowledge-oriented thoughts or behaviour.
- Feelings, emotions or psycho-affective behaviour.
- Neuro-physiological effects of an emotional state (blush, sweat, breathing fast, etc.).
- Verbal, para-verbal, and non-verbal aspects of communication.
- Decision-making capacity and choices regarding one’s career.

A good observation requires: clear and precise definition of *aims* and *objectives*; selecting the most appropriate *forms* of observation to be used; *conditions* and *means* for accurate observation (recorders, charts, etc.); *immediate writing down* of things observed (in an observation protocol) since time can alter mental recollection; making an *optimal number* of observations; *observation taking place* in varied circumstances; drawing up a *list* of observation units (behavioural sequences, if the case).

Observation units (temporal): continuing (longer duration) and *discontinuing* (shorter intervals). Mucchielli (1974) recommends a number of elements observed over equal time intervals, or a few minutes equally distributed over several days at various moments of the day.

Establishing observation intervals targets: setting *control landmarks* (or conceptualising the observed facts) revealed by previous observations, setting *degrees of estimates of the* mental characteristics (extremely, highly, etc.); setting *qualitative estimates* converted in quantitative elements (figures, points: for instance 5 points for the high frequency of the characteristic, 1 point for the lack of it, etc.).

Observation chart –according to the *behavioural units* to be observed, and based on *criteria* so as to ensure the systematic nature of observation (Drumond, 1981):

- criteria regarding *form – location* (e.g. we distinguish between the pupil’s behaviour in the classroom, outside the classroom, in the counsellor’s office, etc.); *orientation* (position of subject’s motor structures in relation with environment structures); *dimensional typology* of the subject (certain reflexive movements can be noticed and recorded – e.g. finger tapping); *intrinsic properties of body or skin* (change in complexion colour, body temperature, etc.);

- criteria *regarding the direct effects* of subject's behaviour on the environment;
- *theoretic* and *abstract* criteria that can be of two types – classification by *cause* (competitive behaviour triggered by the presence of a rival; affective-cognitive manifestations, voluntary or involuntary, etc.) and *functional* classification (behaviours have certain functions, in close connection to psychological needs).

Factors differentiating counsellors in the process of observation:

- “personal equation”⁴ of the observing counsellor (Dafinoiu, 2002) is related to the following perceptive types: *descriptive* (thorough, dry); *evaluative* (tendency to evaluate, interpret, judge); *learned* (furnishes complementary information); *imaginative* and *poetic* (neglects facts and favours fancy);
- the counsellor's tendency to get anchored in the present and the client's to go back to past experiences;
- the variable capacity of counsellors to “articulate” the data in the perceptive field, that is finding root cause and connections between the observed facts;
- width / range of observation field refers to the relations between the volume of observation and the degree of focus;
- the capacity to resist perturbation that can alter the observation field, that is the possibility to differentiate between “fact objectivity” and “subjectivity of interpretation”;
- the projection is based on a certain identification between the counsellor (the observer) and the subject (the observed); this identification enhances up to a point the observation and understanding of things observed (e.g.: observing pupils in school will be done easier by a person who went through the same experience recently or is familiar with school life), but facts may be altered as well (e.g.: counsellor likes someone in the group over the others);
- personal interpretation represents a phenomenon related to projection that attributes to real facts significances springing from one's personal universe (Veron and Gardner, 1960, 1962);
- the psycho-individual particularities of the counsellor (professional and life experience, temperament, focus, the ability to seize the essential, do not make suggestive interventions, etc.).

⁴ “The observer's personal equation” – the phrase was coined by the German astronomer Bessel (1816), who noticed that the errors committed by the various astronomers who had made the same observation, repeatedly, were specific to each. Consequently, each observation bears the observer's personal hallmark.

Target population

The categories of persons that can become subjects of counselling through observation are:

Pupils – to prevent and diminish school failure, alleviate behaviour disorder, improve self-image, self-knowledge of psycho-intellectual potential / attitude / interests / aspirations / system of values; develop decision-making and career-guidance abilities, perform well in vocational testing, discuss the meaning and value of work, etc.

Parents – in view of learning about the psycho-pedagogical field, develop cooperation between family and school, raise awareness of their important educational role, and increase responsibility for their own children.

Teachers – in the process of raising awareness of the aspects related to educational and professional guidance, eliminate conformist and stereotype choices, ensure pupils' contact with new career models, seek and use information about personal development according to the needs of each pupil, advocate a positive understanding with regard to career planning, etc.

Educational managers – for the training of communication skills, participation, motivation and team work, improvement and adaptation of the educational offer to the needs of pupils and the community, optimisation of the manager-teacher-student communication, strengthening the connection with school counsellors, organization and encouragement of students visiting universities according to their interests (mapped with counsellor's support), exploring possibilities for professional partnerships, etc.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Examples:

A counsellor can build and use several types of observation chart.

As an example, we present a type of observation “*chart*”⁵ that can be used in evaluating the staff according to the performance specified in job description. This requires that a counsellor be suitably trained and experienced and have sufficient knowledge in related fields (human medicine, sociology, economy, etc.).

⁵ Adapted from *Management Psychology Treaty*. Moraru and Tabachin (1997).

Among the aspects to be observed we enumerate desirable *aptitudes* for a certain field of activity:

Physical	Sensorial	Mental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • muscular strength and physical resistance • reaction speed: uniform, selective • manual skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sight • hearing • good capacity of walking and standing • standing noise, vibration, temperature variations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attention • memory • spirit of innovation, inventiveness • logical thinking, ability to argue in favour of proposals • practical intelligence (quick understanding of issues, solving problems, organizing one's work) • theoretical–applicative intelligence (understanding technical, economic and organizational problems that require research and study) • verbal skills (fluency, intelligibility, grammatical correctitude)

Personality traits	Psychosocial traits	General and specialized knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • commitment • organizational capacity • discipline, diligence • initiative • discretion, tact, loyalty, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sociability • adequate behaviour (posture, language) • team spirit (integration in group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aesthetic sense • general knowledge • technological knowledge • mathematical knowledge

Another possible observation *chart* can be constructed by the structure of psycho-social-professional profiles of occupations in relation to certain needs, and psycho-professional profile of the subject:

No.	Qualities	Assessment		
		Desirable	Necessary	Absolutely necessary
I.	Physical			
II.	Sensorial			
III.	Mental			
IV.	Personality traits			
V.	Psychosocial traits			
VI.	General and specialized knowledge			
VII.	.....		

As regards adult counselling, other points can be added to the list:

- professional qualities:
 - background,
 - knowledge of particular fields;
- experience;
- mental health.

Another type of “chart” invites to self-recording by the subject (Beck, apud Dafinoiu, 2002):

Last name: First name:

Age: Date of record:

Situation / state	Emotions	Automatic thoughts
<i>Description of:</i> 1. Ideas, thoughts, memories etc., that caused the unpleasant emotion <i>or</i> 2. Events that produced a disturbing emotion	<i>Specification of:</i> 1. Behaviour: aggressive, anxious, peaceful, etc. <i>Assessment of:</i> 1. Intensity of emotion on a scale from 0 to 8 (where 0 = absent and 8 = maximum intensity)	<i>Description of:</i> 1. Automatic thoughts preceding the emotion <i>Assessment of:</i> 1. Level of confidence in automatic (spontaneous) thoughts on a scale from 0 to 8

Method assessment

Advantages:

- seizes natural attitudinal and aptitude-related manifestations, behaviour, etc., in real life and activity, especially offering qualitative data;
- allows data gathering on non-verbal behaviour;
- allows longitudinal analyses by recording behaviours over longer periods of time (months or years, by participatory observation, for instance);
- life study is far less artificial than with other methods (questionnaire-based investigation, interview, experiment).

Disadvantages:

- stimulates the social defence mechanism of the subject;
- the presence of the counsellor modifies the situation to be observed; some changes are possible in the behaviour of subjects (some counsellors can have a tonic effect on subjects, while others can intimidate, depress, inhibit);
- the counsellor has little control over external variables that can affect the observation data;
- the data collected through observation are difficult to quantify;
- observation is limited to individuals or small samples of subjects;
- the counsellor's attention can be oriented selectively towards certain expectations, beliefs, theories, etc., that can affect the objectivity of observation and based on these choices it is possible to induce the effect of (self) confirmation;
- the difficulty to take notes and observe at the same time leads to recording the results of observation after a while, occasionally inexact;
- aspects related to observation data assessment yield certain categories of errors (Piaget):
 - “*centring error*” – the aspects observed tend to be overestimated in relation to other aspects,
 - “*contrast error*” – the counsellor focuses on the minimum differences noticed between various aspects, and exaggerates them,
 - “*assimilation error*” – the counsellor focuses on the similarities between various aspects, rather than on the differences,
 - “*the anchor effect*” – although the counsellor believes to be evaluating a singular aspect, the effects of previous observations influence him/her in the current assessment,
 - “*the halo effect*” – the counsellor appreciating certain aspects in a subject will be influenced in the same way when evaluating other dimensions (for instance, a pleasant-looking person will influence the observer when his/her personality is evaluated).

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Investigation

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History

In the first half of the 20th century, investigation began to be used in America, and then in some European countries with a tradition in social research, accompanying the student and group assessment.

Mostly developed in the second half of the 20th century for the study of educational phenomena (school management and administration), the investigation was simultaneously used alongside with the scientific testing methods.

Today the investigation is a separate method, owing to the clear objectives, principles and rules of application.

Theoretical background

Investigation is considered a complex method in social sciences, since it varies greatly with the process: from a simple search for information necessary to solve a minor problem, to ample, lengthy research based on rigorously elaborated instruments.

According to the domain under investigation, there are several definitions:

- data gathering method: “action to collect information regarding the behaviour of the learner, obtained through investigation (interview, discussion, document study)” (Macavei, 2001);
- research and investigation method “incorporating techniques, procedures, and interrogative data gathering instruments” (Dictionary of sociology, 1993);
- study “organized to clarify certain issues, explain certain behaviours or manifestations of persons, or discover the weight of influential factors in an economy sector” (Gugiuman, 1978);
- extracting general information with reference to a complex problem occasionally associated with psychological examination (Mucchielli, 1982);
- discussion (face to face or over the telephone) with a view to getting to know a person or his/her opinions on a matter (Gugel, 2002);
- inspection, verification “to obtain information on the object of study” (*Webster’s Dictionary*).

Specialists have defined investigation in relation to the aim of each discipline or following certain investigation criteria.

Whatever the modality of data collection, there are certain aspects of investigation that must be known by any practitioner:

- is of a non-experimental nature, control over variables under investigation is relatively little;
- the communication between the investigator and the investigated (group) is a strongly asymmetric relation, the former waiting for (and occasionally influencing) answers from the latter;
- approaches, qualitatively and quantitatively, dimensions of individual and social life: events, phenomena, processes characteristic for social reality, as well as people’s attitude towards them;
- it clarifies the range of aspirations, interests, concerns, and behaviours of clients in various fields;
- it cumulates information collected through diverse investigation techniques: observation, documentary analysis, content analysis, opinion poll in order to compare / complete its own results;
- it can be performed orally or in writing, with specific interrogation instruments and techniques.

Gradually, investigation techniques have developed and diversified, being considered independent method alongside with questionnaire, interview, opinion poll.

There are however a few unanimously recognized differences when analysed comparatively:

- investigation, unlike interview, uses standardized techniques, this is why it is occasionally called a standardized interview;
- investigation is always based on a questionnaire, while the interview unfolds on the basis of an interview guide or even without a previously prepared instrument;
- investigation (like the opinion poll) must have a representative sample, while the interview is addressed to particular persons;
- investigation is an extensive method, requiring the collection of relatively simple information, while the interview is an intensive techniques used to get deeper psychological insight;
- results of the investigation, unlike those of an interview, usually require statistical qualitative and quantitative processing;
- investigation can unfold with oral and written techniques, direct or indirect, while the interview is mainly oral;
- within an investigation, the information is especially collected from groups of subjects, while in an interview from individuals;
- investigation requires neutral operators, while an interview is conducted by professionals;
- investigation and the opinion poll are generally quantitative methods, while the interview is mainly qualitative.

By admitting the non-uniformity and non-existence of the same points of view in defining investigation, John Wise (1988) in a study on method defines the investigation as “an attempt to add and interpret facts on a social institution, group, or field... conducted to establish existing conditions.”

In *Webster's Dictionary* there is a definition of investigation as “an inspection, often official, to provide accurate information, an inspection or critical study, usually about the social implications of the object under study; the success of it consists in describing the existing conditions and depends on the careful collection of data and their competent interpretation.” (apud Gugiuman, 1978).

When an investigation is undertaken with a view to knowing a person, the investigation takes place as a conversation, and when questionnaires are given to people they are semi-

or lightly structured. If it is intended to extract information about a more complex problem, test-based psychological examination in addition to investigation is recommended.

In counselling, investigation is used for getting to know the person and the significant people in his/her life: parents, teachers, colleagues, etc.

Questionnaires destined for parents or teachers contain questions targeting the clarification of objectives, same as in the questionnaire or discussion with the student subject: professional qualifications of the parents, social and economic situation of the family, opinions regarding the intellectual, educational, and vocational capacities of the child.

Educational agents are usually questioned about the student's rank in the class (intellectually, social conduct), individual characteristics, difficulties in adaptation, dominant interests, recommended school or occupational domain. The questions must be adapted to each case.

Method presentation

The stages of organizing a standard social investigation are:

- previous documentation;
- defining concepts;
- deciding upon the topic and formulating the aims;
- operationalisation and quantification;
- identifying population to be investigated;
- establishing investigation techniques and procedures;
- drawing up work instruments;
- carrying out a pilot investigation;
- building the team of investigators / field operators;
- drawing up the calendar of the investigation;
- data collection;
- verification of data collected;
- selecting valid questionnaires / forms in view of processing;
- coding information;

- data processing;
- analysis and interpretation of information;
- drawing up the investigation report;
- proposing a strategy / intervention / correction measures.

In the case of psycho-educational investigations for career counselling, the stages are fewer:

The first stage consists in delimiting the problem and phrasing the hypotheses. In the course of information / documentation on the investigation field it is possible to rephrase the initial hypotheses. For instance, if the factors determining fluctuation of students' vocational interests at a certain age, it is first and foremost obligatory to know the means of information they have access to, as well as how mature their decision-making capacity is at that age.

The second stage consists in drawing up work strategies and choosing the sample or lot of the general population subjected to the research. The sample size is established based on the level up to which it is intended to generalize in conclusions, or the degree of accuracy in the conclusions obtained. The sample is compiled by exact statistical rules, such as the significant characteristics of the population (gender, age, residence, education, etc.), which can be random or based on accessibility of individuals selected, financial and human resources available, etc. Choosing a sampling technique greatly depends on the counsellor's experience and the supposedly strength connection between the variable targeted and the characteristics of the sample.

The third stage is choosing the data collection instruments and the doing the fieldwork. The techniques frequently used are: questionnaire and interview guide, observation, focus group, discussion, tests.

The fourth stage is information processing and interpretation. "Information / facts do not speak for themselves. The researcher ready to employ the investigation method will establish what processing methods will be used." (Wise, 1988).

In counselling, practitioners investigating human beings can choose between two modalities of result processing and interpretation available: logical fact analysis, and statistical analysis.

The fifth stage consists in presenting the information obtained by specialists to the scientific community and the public structured in the investigation report (considered a micro-monography of the respective case).

Investigation techniques

Oral or direct investigation is used more frequently by the media. It is preferable to the written one due to the interactive communication facilitated between the human subjects involved. The two versions of oral investigation are face-to-face, and telephone investigation. The investigation using the questions recorded on voice recording devices is a mix, more and more used currently.

Indirect investigation (written or by questionnaire) is characterized by the distance between the investigator and the investigated, the questionnaire being the written instrument given to the latter (traditionally) by mail or e-mail (more and more frequently); there are also other indirect versions, less used: simultaneous administration to groups or in the press.

The sample size depends on the degree of accuracy desired, and the financial and professional resources available. Nevertheless, a medium-size sample is statistically sufficient and operational. For instance, in investigations with samples of 800-1000 people, the results have a precision of $\pm 3.1\%$.

Target population

The use of method targets all client categories: pupils, young graduates from all education and training levels, adults (with particular status and roles).

Examples, case studies, exercises

Types of investigation

Mini-investigation is an investigation that can be resumed to a few questions. For instance, passers-by are asked to express their opinions on a problem or a statement. Opinions are not commented upon and no further questions asked. Such a mini-investigation can be carried out in a seminar, without too many preparations. The question comes most often under the form: “*What is your opinion of ...*”, or a statement is read and the subject is asked to give his/her opinion. Answers must be recorded or written down according to a protocol (Gugel, 2002).

Interviews – centred on certain aims – are structured sets of questions on a certain topic. There are several question types: multiple answer questions, yes-no answer questions, open questions.

A possible question typology:

- warm-up questions or ice-breakers (that enhance dialogue): (self)introduction and/or information on the purpose of the meeting;
- thematic: related to what the interview is about;
- ideas / options / decisions: if you could make a decision, what would it be?
- action-related: the intention to get involved in action.

Telephone, mail or e-mail investigation is just as valid as other procedures and presents the advantage of being highly operative but the cooperation / response levels are lower.

Data collection includes opinions, interests, attitudes, data (e.g. on the social structure of a habitat), etc. It is recommendable to use a questionnaire including the following items:

- related to group-inclusion (age, occupation, position, etc.);
- leading to the formulation of opinions, remark, wishes, etc. related to the investigation topic.

The **activation poll** asks questions to people involved in a certain matter. The purpose of the poll is not necessarily data gathering, but assessment of the degree of involvement in a process of changing and stimulating initiatives (Gugel, 2002).

Applicability of the method in counselling. In counselling practice social investigation is often used to research the status quo in families with children; the investigation's outcome contributes to taking a differentiated approach to each situation. "The value of investigation is different with pupils from a less favoured social environment, who need compensations and corrections in the personality structuring process" (Gugiuman, 1978).

Social investigation is often completed by a practitioner with a test-based psychological assessment (that will offer information on client's personality traits) and questionnaires to investigate aspirations, interests, motivation, and aptitude resources. This type of investigation can offer relevant information on the system of personal values, as well as the client's decision-making capacity applied to a future career.

Method assessment

Advantages:

The method is of some worth, since it represents a “scientific means of investigation, often the only one available, of the subjective realm of social life – opinions, attitudes, satisfactions, aspirations, beliefs, knowledge, interests, etc. at an individual and a group level” (Vlăsceanu, 1993). Investigation is supple, offering the possibility of application in various fields and situations, it has the quality of speed in gathering information, it can span a large population segment, and is permeable to the approach of multiple topics.

The investigation leads to obtaining information that make possible the extension of the results obtained by researching a part of the population, to the entire population (with a certain error margin), yielding a “profile”.

Disadvantages:

Possible errors can intervene while actually doing an investigation, either owing to the faulty work method, lack of cooperation from the subjects, or the nature of the investigated field (subjective issues and players) that does not follow a clear linear model. In investigation errors may also spring from the choice of sample (unrepresentative or irrelevantly stratified). This is why it is recommended to associate collective investigation with personal one. Correlation and completion of data tend to result in a reduction in errors. Another limit refers to the content of the questionnaire and its length. Fatigue may lead to decrease in interest, and standard, superficial, stereotyped, conformistic answers.

It is often said that social investigation merely states a fact – that it is descriptive – explanatory in a certain phase of the phenomenon under investigation. Psychological investigation goes beyond the limit, since it considers the person a bearer of a certain social development and experience. The recourse to recollection and experimental study allows the researcher to foresee subsequent lines of development. However, compared to social investigation carried out by a complex team, the individual psychologist who carries out an investigation must reunite all qualities of a team.

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Case Study

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History

Case study was used as early as the end of the 19th century in various domains (law, legislation, medicine, business), especially as a research method, but the 1950s marked the spread of method on a larger scale and the recognition of its efficiency in the school process. Conant (1949) was apparently among the first to organize his course using written case studies, read out and then discussed. Experimented in *Harvard Business School* as a pedagogical method, case study revealed particular formative qualities through “the transfer from teacher to student as regards the responsibility of learning, the role of the latter shifting from passive accumulation to active involvement” (Boehrer, 1990).

Nowadays the method is widely employed both in education and professional training. In career counselling, case study penetrated together with other modern counselling methods, being used next to and complementary to traditional methods.

Theoretical background

In modern societies, requiring well-trained individuals for rapid and immediate entry on the labour market, work methods with pupils, students and adults must offer the conditions of a much closer link to the real world, help practice abilities that could easily be transferred to day-to-day activity at the workplace.

Cerghit (1997) describes education as going beyond theory and ensuring the framework for practicing abilities and skills. The action-based methods (operational and practical) are now used in teaching for this very reason. From the perspective of educational sciences, case study is included in the category of methods based on real action.

Zlate (1982) considers that the idea of case study in learning originates both in teaching practice (which recommends intuitive and concrete models to make the contents more accessible), as well as in the theories of active pedagogy (linking the efficiency of learning to the activism of learner) or social psychology (the theories of group dynamics). Thus, the author considers case study “an active method (because it encourages each participant), but also a group method (because it is based on the interaction between group members with a view to solving the respective case).”

Method presentation

In traditional counselling, the beneficiary is considered a passive recipient of information, following instructions, which lead to low commitment. The main role belongs to the counsellor who organizes information, offering them in a final accessible version. Modern counselling shifts the stress from the counsellor to the beneficiary, actively committing and involving the latter in taking responsibility for learning and results of the counselling process. The client is responsible for future acquisitions and discovers the immediate benefits of the things learned. The counsellor is seen as a process facilitator, for offering security and trust, preparing activities, training, helping draw the conclusions. Information is “discovered” and “lived” by the beneficiaries, the contents are centred on real life aspects, tasks place participants in concrete work situations requiring negotiation of action options, individual or team analysis, choice of solutions that should represent personal or group answers. On the basis of experiences in the work “incubator”, personal and general conclusions will then be drawn, when the counsellor’s role is to ask questions, guide, and not give ready-made solutions.

We can enumerate a few features of modern counselling:

- participant-oriented, aiming to satisfy immediate individual / group needs;
- participatory;
- source of feedback;
- centred on respect towards the participant;
- takes place in an atmosphere of safety and a comfortable environment.

Case study overcomes the inconvenient of traditional methods through the following characteristics:

- mediates the confrontation with *real life situations*. The case under debate is cut from authentic life situations, practical experience of counsellor or participants;
- involves *practical learning, critical thinking* (by asking questions related to a problematic issue), *positive approach* (solution-oriented), understanding the limitations and obstacles in a certain situation;
- maximally provokes the group by *active involvement of all members* in debating on solution alternatives. A study at the University of Buffalo (1994) shows that the attendance rate in traditional courses, containing presentations, lectures, and a large amount of information was 50-60%, compared to more active courses where used case studies, involved the group and developed thinking abilities – and the attendance rate was 95%;
- encourages *learning through collaboration and cooperation*. Participants first learn from one another through debate, argumentation, support of their own arguments, and reflection on the opinions and solutions of the others. Merry (1954) considers the process inductive rather than deductive: “focus is on learning through cooperation, and not on exposing of one’s own opinions about the teacher”;
- requires and develops *teamwork, decision-making and problem solving, oral communication, argumentation and debate skills*;
- develops *the capacity to analyse, anticipate and appreciate the practical validity of a solution*;
- increases responsibility, *self-confidence and trust*. Erksine (1981) considers that case study helps pupils develop “a set of communication, debate and problem-solving skills, increasing their self-confidence and trust in their classmates”.

The purpose of method is not to put ample information across, but enhance the practice of certain abilities that can be transferred then to day-to-day life. If we relate to Bloom’s taxonomy, case study focuses less on *knowledge* and more on: *understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, assessment*.

By analysing and discussing various cases, participants learn how to approach a problem when there is apparently no solution. They identify concrete situations and understand the contextual factors contributing to their generation, are encouraged to develop their own analysis and apply their knowledge to problem solving. In addition, case study prepares the participants for problems of real life, crisis situations, offering them the possibility of early developing an efficient set of reactions and abilities to solve them. This is why case study is considered an excellent “rehearsal for life”.

Case (Cerghit, 1997) is:

- a support of inductive knowledge allowing the transition from the particular (case, situation) to the general (conclusions that can be extended to an entire category of similar cases or situations);
- a basis of deductive knowledge (ideas taken from the development of the case will later be applied to daily life).

In counselling, *cases* are centred on an individual, a group, a family in critical moments of their lives. The entirety of social, cultural, economic, historical details outline the problem-situation the key character(s) is (are) confronted with. A case is similar to a short narration, rich in details, of a “fragment of life” (significant incidents at home or at school, extreme situations, crossroads in choosing or changing jobs, etc.).

But not any situation can be considered a ‘case’, only those meeting the following conditions (Mucchielli, apud Zlate, 1982):

- it is *authentic*, taken from real life. Abstract situations unrelated to individual or group needs do not lead to authentic analyses and solutions, and do not produce the learning effect;
- there is an *urgency of intervention* due to tension or drama. Common, everyday situations, with no tension, do not rouse an intervention and analysis plan;
- it is *significant* in relation to the problems or expectations of the participants;
- it contains *details and information* related to the context and factors triggering the problem. Be it full or partial, details allow for analyses, discussions and debates, as well as outlining of alternative solution alternatives.

In career counselling, the method of case study requires its use as a work instrument to solve a critical situation (described in the case). Through interaction, the group members come to define the problem, identify alternative solutions to solve it, choose the final solution, and propose an implementation plan. Case study advances a *simulation* of solving a critical situation taken from real life.

A good *case* needn’t have just one solution (that is an exercise solved according to an algorithm), but allow various approaches or procedures leading to solution alternatives.

Application variants

According to the domain it is used in, the method bears different variants or application stages. Neacșu and Cerghit (2001) consider important the following (general) steps to take in processing a case:

1. Seizing the case:
 - presenting the case;
 - obtaining the necessary information through:
 - questions addressed to teacher / counsellor,
 - field work,
 - study additional sources of knowledge;
 - systematizing;
 - fact analysis;
 - discovering causes and relations between events;
 - elaborating the probable nucleus of solutions.
2. Establishing solutions
3. Adopting the decision:
 - confronting versions;
 - comparing their worth;
 - arranging variants;
 - adopting the decision.
4. Sustaining the decision

Specificity and stages of case study

In career counselling, case study is mainly used as a *group method*. A case is presented by the counsellor and submitted to teamwork debate and solution. Since a case is of interest and actuality to all group members, the stress falls on collaboration and cooperation among them. The decision regarding the optimal solution variants will be taken *during a session / a class*, which because shorter may not include research (in the literature). What is important is *personal experience* of each group member and *the transferable abilities* the participants become aware of and develop in the case solving process. There are certain situations in which the method is used for individual counselling or research. Since these situations are less met in career counselling, they will not be described in detail in this chapter.

a. Getting participants familiar with the case

Cases can be read or presented through information and communication means: audio, video.

According to the counsellor's choice, the case can be presented thus:

- reading / playing the recording to the entire group;
- if the group is large, it may be divided into teams and each team will receive a written presentation of the case to get familiar with;
- each member of the group receives a sheet with the presentation of the case. The case is taken in individually.

In this phase the initial contact with the case, data, events, and characters involved. For a bird's eye view, it is recommended to read the entire description. The initial feeling is of being overwhelmed (too much information) or missing details (input shortage). It is recommended to re-read in order to identify the social, cultural, economic, historical or political aspects that make up the context, and note down the relevant ones. If there are already questions about the case, it is best NOT to read them, but reread the case attentively.

Simply becoming familiar with the case does not automatically lead to finding out the optimal solution alternatives. Other few stages are necessary in order to finalize the process and find an efficient final solution.

b. Identifying fundamental questions

In some versions of the method the questions are already given (a sort of guide to case analysis and decision-making). In general however, the group decides on the relevant questions. In real life situations, no one will formulate the questions for us to help us have a successful career.

It is recommended to ask questions like: "How...?", "What are ...?" "Why...?" Identifying the relevant questions directs the analysis procedure. Examples of questions valid in most cases:

- Who are the *characters*?
- What are their *objectives* (explicit and implicit)?
- What are the *opportunities and risks*?
- What are the *problems*?
- What are the *factors we rely on* (explicit aspects, deductions), when we make a decision regarding a certain solution? Are these factors trustworthy / decisive?
- What are the *decisions* and *actions* that must be undertaken?
- What are the *alternatives*?

- What are the *criteria* for weighing / assessing / judging the alternatives?
- What are the recommended *steps* / *actions*?
- How can we *convince* others that our solutions are the best?
- What have we *learnt* from this case?
- What *impact* do the results of study have for personal life or the problematic situation I am in?

This stage can be carried out in a large group or in small teams. If the questions were not pre-established it is now appropriate to write down the interesting ones (like in a brainstorming). It will be found that diverse aspects raise interest (due to complexity of case, and subjectivity of life experiences of the participants).

c. Identifying the problem(s)

While the previous stage is considered one of general and non-focused analysis of all elements or details that may rise interest at first contact (a sort of “warm-up” or “in-depth familiarization”), in this stage the group must seize the essential problem or problems of the case. This stage is dedicated to discovering the significant facts, to separate the essential from the unessential. It is considered that this is the “diagnosis” phase (Zlate, 1982).

There are situations where the problem is clearly formulated (sometimes as a question) even at the end of the case, and the task of the group is much easier, the stress being laid on finding solution alternatives.

d. Identifying solution alternatives

After the clear formulation of problem(s) the group notes down the solution alternatives, based on their personal experiences and as result of a group debate. For each alternative, the advantages, disadvantages, and consequences of the solutions put forth must be taken into account. We speak of *assessing* the positive and negative aspects of each alternative and *anticipating* the consequences of their application.

Systematizing all alternatives in a table may make comparison and hierarchy easier:

	Advantages	Disadvantages	Consequences
Variant 1:			
Variant 2:			
Variant 3:			
Etc.			

It is important to consider the obstacles (disadvantages, risks) that can intervene in finding a solution to the case, and the enhancing factors (advantages). The maturity, efficiency, and value of an alternative are a result of this analysis, and not a product of simply stating a possible solution.

e. The decision regarding the alternative to be implemented

Once each variant proposed has been written down and analysed, the group must make a decision regarding the “winning option”, in other words decide on a favourable procedure to solve the problem. If there is sufficient time and the complexity of the case demands it, two viable alternatives may be chosen.

Although the group members can have divergent opinions regarding the final implementation alternative, it is necessary that an agreement be reached on negotiating within the group / team. If the preceding steps were followed, good solutions should come up rather spontaneously. It is important not to skip steps in order to reach a solution more quickly, because important details may be omitted to outline the optimal solution. In addition, in this phase the logical procedure used in the choice of an alternative over another must be explained.

f. Developing and implementation plan

Finalizing the case does not only mean opting for a solution alternative, but also developing an efficient implementation plan. This step is very important because it proves the efficiency of the decision.

g. Result assessment and case conceptualisation

In this stage general conclusions are drawn that might be used in similar situations. Enumerating the aspects related to teamwork, communication, decision-making, and transferring the solution to other similar cases will answer the question “What have we learnt from the case?”.

h. Preparing the final report

Counsellors may request a *written* or *oral report* that should present the solutions found. These may be more easily accepted and understood by listeners if the explanation is logical and coherent and the implementation plan is explicit.

The written report

A short report is more efficient than a long and complicated one. This does not mean that important elements will be omitted, but that the relevant issues will be presented clearly and concisely.

Structure:

- *Summary*: a synthesis of the more important aspects and solutions in a few lines, containing: the definition of the problem, the solutions proposed, and the arguments in favour of each.
- *Problem*: the main problem(s) the characters face; not anyone reading the case should be expected to be able to identify the problem, this is why it is necessary to present it/them succinctly.
- *Alternatives*: listing all relevant alternatives, arguments and counterarguments, limitations and obstacles for each alternative.
- *Conclusions*: analysis and the logic behind the choice of a certain solution, reasons for rejecting the other alternatives.
- *Implementation*: action plan leading to implementation of decision, so that the reader should see not just why a certain solution has been chosen, but also the way in which it will be put into practice and the consequences of this action.

Oral report

In order to present the report a member of the group / team will be chosen. Each member must be prepared to present the results of their teamwork and be capable of commenting and arguing the choices made. Preparation for an oral report will include:

- *Description of the case*: short introduction to the case.
- *Definition of the problem*: presentation of the problem the characters in the case are facing.
- *Analysis of alternatives*: concise presentation of possible solution alternatives.
- *Conclusions*: the reasons for choosing a certain alternative over others.
- *Implementation*: implementation plan.

In oral presentations, the time allowed is rather short, which means that only the most important aspects will be put forth. It may be asked to present only the conclusions and answer questions.

Conclusions

Case study is one of the most challenging methods in career counselling and should not be slighted. Properly approached, case studies offer the possibility of developing decision-making abilities, which may successfully be transferred to concrete career-related and personal problems.

By presenting solutions from other case studies to clients facing personal struggles, a warning will be issued on the potential problems they themselves may face. The abilities

of setting aim, analysis of possible alternatives, decision-making, developing an action plan, etc. will be useful in real life situations. The report will also enhance the ability of synthetic expression (oral or in writing), of arguing and defending one's own opinions. The role of the counsellor is to organize and monitor the process, *enhance* discussions, make sure that communication rules are followed, and alleviate conflicts.

Target population

In career counselling, case study may be applied to working with all target groups: pupils, undergraduate students, adults, unemployed, handicapped persons, etc. Small groups are best (5-6 or 10-12 people), but the method is also suitable with larger groups divided in subgroups / teams, with different tasks.

Examples, case studies, exercises

There are currently many sites on the Internet offering examples of case studies in various fields: medicine, law, agriculture, business, psychology.

Counsellors must have a **portfolio of case studies** representative for their domain that should be usable in counselling sessions or classes. A portfolio may include cases encountered in their own activity, in real life situations, or may be taken from the media, if sufficient details are available to outline an authentic case. Even a difficult situation in the counselling group may be considered a case and treated accordingly.

There are situations where the participants are asked to create their own case – from the their personal experience, or a significant case from their social or professional circle. They are free to choose not to expose their personal situation as a case (counsellors must make sure that participants really wish to place their personal situation at the disposal of the group, and that the consequences are understood).

Example I:

M aged 16 is a second year pupil in vocational school, specialization in construction painting. His family makes a modest income. After 1990 his parents lost their job, and on losing unemployment benefit and social aid their material situation worsens. An older brother and sister left home when they found a job. The father suffers from tuberculosis and is an alcoholic, and the atmosphere at home is more and more disagreeable. M seeks to hide his circumstances especially from his classmates. His dream is to continue his

studies and go to the faculty of constructions. But his parents put pressure on him to find a job and help with the family income. There is much argument over this. M does not know what to do, where to find guidance or financial support and this is why he seeks the help of the counsellor.

Example II:

S is 22 and is a first year medical student. She is an only child and has never caused problems to her parents. Her mother is a pharmacist and the father a reputed doctor. Both advised S to go to medical school although she did not wish to. She took exam several times until she succeeded, her parents gave her financial support. But S fails her first year exams and announces her parents that she is quitting because she cannot handle it. Moreover, she associates with people whom her mother describes as bad influence. Her parents from where they live have no control over S. The mother seeks counselling because S is not concerned with her future. She describes S timid and vulnerable, with a liking for art (she went to a music high school and would have liked to enter conservatory), but her parents did not consider this a successful profession and decided she should go to medical school despite their daughter's interest in another field.

Example III:

My name is Renata. I am 24 and I have 2 children. The daughter is 4 and the son only 6 months old. I have been out of work since I first gave birth. I started working in a fast food restaurant ever since high school. After graduation I worked as a waitress and then I stopped when I got pregnant with my first child. I enjoyed working, being independent, but I found it hard to work when I was pregnant. The father of my daughter told me that he would help, so I quit my job. But he didn't stay with me for long, and we were fighting all the time anyway. When the girl was three, I found a neighbour to look after her and took a job as a telephone operator. I didn't really like the job. I got pregnant again 3 months later. I continued working for a few months, but then quit. Now I don't know what to do: the children need looking after, but it is hard because I have no money and no one to help me.

Method assessment

Advantages:

- gaining experience in problem solving;
- developing teamwork abilities, raises confidence and reduces anxiety. Naturally, when an individual is faced with a problem, anxiety may block

initiation of solution procedures. The team offers support, which leads to decreasing pressure, increasing confidence and performance;

- developing communication and thinking abilities, encouraging critical analysis and active participation;
- stimulating confrontation with authentic problems, which require using abilities similar to those in real life;
- research has proved that case study leads to finalizing tasks on time. The interest generated by cases presented combined with support from the team / colleagues leads to an increase in efficiency and mood improvement;
- after using the method for solving several cases, it can be found that this procedure is an interesting and rewarding learning method. Success in one's personal career will represent the real reward for the time spent in case solving.

Disadvantages:

- the study of one case cannot offer a basis for relevant generalization;
- the method is not efficient to put across an information / scientific content;
- it is difficult to evaluate the contribution of each team member to the solutioning of case, and the impact felt by the actors involved.

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Focus Group

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History

The technique is linked to the name of two sociologists: Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton (1948). Focus group are first mentioned in an article by Merton published in 1946 in „*American Journal of Sociology*”, but only in the 1970s did focus group investigations begin to be used on an ever larger large scale.

The starting point of this type of investigation seems nevertheless to go back in time and is related on the one hand to the development of unstructured in-depth interview techniques, especially in anthropology, and on the other to group dynamics research.

Theoretical background

Focus group in career counselling is a *qualitative method*, a sort of *interview* to “produce / obtain” a certain kind of information. It is an exploration technique, reuniting a small number of persons guided by a moderator who has the role to facilitate the discussion. The moderator uses a group interview guide in order to keep the discussion focused, and the participants speak freely and spontaneously about a series of themes that are or interest to them, previously announced.

The method of focus group has the following characteristics: *focalisation* (e.g.: in marketing the research is focused on people’s reactions to a certain advertisement

campaign, in social sciences it can be a behavioural scenario, an event, a concept, etc.); the simultaneous use of several *respondents* to generate information; focus on an external *stimulus*; relatively *phased* (by a moderator); these characteristics differentiate focus group from other group interviews.

Why and when is the method useful? There is a wide range of situations where the use of method is recommended, such as:

- for a *deeper understanding* and a *larger perspective* on an issue;
- *data collection* (not used for testing hypotheses), in addition to other methods; it is not used to solve particular problems, but it targets data gathering and the analysis of group influence;
- *making one aware of one's own perspective* – when faced with active disagreement and challenged, people analyse their points of view more intensely than during an individual interview.

The information yielded by a focus group can be grouped into two categories, that are inter-correlated: *a. information on group processes* (how people interact and communicate, both at an intra-personal level: thoughts, feelings, attitudes and values of an individual, and within the group), and *b. information on the content* around which group processes are organized (the central stimulus / concept and the related aspects).

Focus group is used in the most diverse contexts. We present below some fields where focus group have been of use:

- marketing and advertising;
- politics;
- community assessment;
- institutional assessment;
- mass-media analysis;
- group analysis;
- career counselling, etc.

Method presentation

The first step towards putting a focus group together is setting up an interview guide adapted to the topic broached. In view of compiling the guide it is necessary to define the thematic horizon of the problem (the topic around which the meeting will gravitate), establish items to be used (questions asked in order to obtain the needed information); developing the main and auxiliary packages (fundamental questions and secondary ones that can come up as consequence of the first batch).

Phrasing the questions represents another essential aspect of the method. These must be: short, clear, supportive of the significance decoding effort, without negation, expressed in ordinary words, lacking in emotionally or value-charged words or phrases that might induce an answer, devoid of moral issues, devoid of judgement of the participants.

The order of the questions may take after:

- *the funnel technique*: from particular to general questions and principles;
- *the reversed funnel technique*: from general to particular.

As regards the question types, they can be classified according to several criteria. Kahn and Cannell (1968) put questions in two categories: primary questions (introductory, open, “ice-breakers”) and secondary (targeting the topic, specific, and aiming for in-depth information). Wheatley (1989) identifies a large number of questions to be used in a focus group:

- direct research questions: on the topic and derived from the research objectives;
- in-depth questions (directed to an issue): target deeper knowledge of attitudes and opinions expresses: “Why ...?”;
- test questions: aim to test the extent of the concepts used;
- warm-up or redirecting questions: prepare a certain topic or bring participants back to the central issues;
- “depersonalised” questions;
- factual questions: regard certain reality aspects directly, and expect answers referring to facts;
- “affective” questions: meant to bring out an affective state, feelings of respondents; they stimulate information generation, but are also very risky (may generate unpredictable reactions);
- anonymous questions: the opinions on a certain topic are written down on paper by each subject;
- silence: as a way of obtaining information.

Throughout the focus group, a moderator must exercise extreme skill in the asking of questions and avoid those that do not bring additional knowledge or may have the following negative effects:

- the purpose of the meeting is not reached;
- participants focus on answering questions and not on their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes as regards the respective topic;

- participants get bored; they answer the questions but are noticeably detached from what is going on;
- the frustration of the moderator increases as he/she fails to obtain the qualitative information expected;
- the client feels his/her needs will not be satisfied;
- qualitative research will look bad both to the participants and to the client.

In order to form a group of participants, we have several recruitment methods: *institutionalised* – recruitment is done by mediation of institutions or organizations; through *field agents* in order to select respondents from the environment they work in; *invitations sent by mail*. It is to be mentioned that rewards (material, psychological) are used irrespective of the recruitment method used.

A controversy that occurs in the stage of creating a focus group is whether screening is necessary during the recruitment process. There are arguments for both variants, ideal being to adapt the strategy to the objectives of the focus group and the variables in the process. *Pro screening arguments*: differences between the cultural and informational level and/or lifestyle of the participants may inhibit the flow of conversation; the principle of reactivity: getting participants familiar with the topic through control procedures, and joining a focus group with prejudice and beliefs that render more valid information. *Argument against screening*: same background of group members leads to a flat and unproductive discussion (sharing must be enhanced only by a few common characteristics, such as social and economic class, profession).

Aside from making a good focus interview guide, another essential aspect is the choice of the participants. Focus group samples can be formed by taking into account several *typologies*. Below, a series of typologies (Bulai, 2000) most frequently encountered in practice.

1. *3X3 System*. This system is based on coupling maximum 3 variables, each with maximum three categories. The most often used variables are: age, gender, education, marital status, residence. The system is applied to professional samples, in order to make conclusions more consistent, but also heterogeneous, so as to support the communication and information seeking process. Such a typology is useful when a certain social and professional category is being focused on, wishing to seize the “internal differences” within the category.
2. *Perfectly homogeneous samples*. Samples of this kind are only used when participants should be perfectly compatible, in order to obtain a maximum of information. It is used in groups and categories with various problems (social integration, marginal groups, minority groups), in general, in categories with difficulties to communicate in public or practice self-segregation.
3. *Gender structured samples*. The issue of compatibility between the moderator and the group is often raised. For highly efficient communication, the moderator

should be of the same gender as the group members. Such sampling is met in family studies or sociology of education.

4. *Conflicted samples*. In such samples the members come from very different categories (at least two active members from each). The categories must be polarized (preferably only two). This sampling promotes argumentation and highlights communication barriers and blockages.
5. *Expert samples*. Especially used in those investigations where information and knowledge of highly qualified individuals are the purpose of the research.
6. *Children and young people samples*. In this case the parents' permission is necessary (for children). Attractive materials are recommended (boards, drawings, photographs, role-play, hypothetical situations), so that all children or young persons should feel at home and relaxed in the group. The moderator must have very good verbal and non-verbal skills.
7. *Parent samples*. The members of one or more families who are concerned with a common issue form the group. The moderation of such groups is difficult especially with strongly traditional families who centre power in a single person. In order to avoid such problems, open, fun moderating is needed, by avoiding to dwell on problems or conflicts. Role-play based on inverting one's family status may be extremely useful and insightful.

The sample must reflect those population segments that can furnish pertinent information regarding the topic under discussion; for this reason, no random sampling will be necessary because it is not intended to make broad generalizations. In exchange there are a series of other questions raised when constructing the sample that cannot receive a standard answer and depend on the context. We present a series of such problems below (Bulai, 2000):

1. *Homogeneity versus heterogeneity*

- Homogeneous samples:
 - used when we wish to harmonize relations between subjects,
 - allow a deeper level of communication between group members,
 - allow the study of the “minimal difference” – those differences of opinions and attitudes that characterize the members of homogeneous groups.
- Heterogeneous samples:
 - do not allow the same compatibility in communication,
 - favour polarization effects,

- may evince communication blockages or barriers between various social categories, value and opinion incompatibilities,
- are important in understanding social mechanisms.

2. *Group amplitude.* For heterogeneous groups where the discrepancy in status is vertical, amplitude reflects heterogeneity, which is the distance between the highest and lowest status. Discussion groups with high amplitude have the following characteristics:

- always require a special communication regime, with high blockage for inferior status members, and special behaviour from high status members;
- performance is poor, for that particular conflicts can develop, and is difficult to moderate.

3. *Pre-existence of group structure.* It is recommendable for focus group to use samples where subjects do not know each other. Nevertheless, samples where all subjects know each other are preferable to those where only part of the members knows each other. In case the respondents are acquainted, the following negative effects may arise:

- private communication channels are quickly created, parallel to the group's, the group becomes unbalanced since subjects who are not known by the pre-existing members will be excluded from discussions;
- the group may be divided into two different structures;
- a leader may very likely appear and the leader's opinions and attitudes will be expressed.

4. *Conflictual groups and harmonious groups.* The climate in the focus group makes the difference. Certainly, conflicts may exist in homogeneous groups as well. It is nevertheless considered that conflictual groups stimulate discussion, but the issues are control and danger of blockage. These types of conflictual groups lead to two kinds of result:

- respondents become more critical and state their position more sharply, without attempting to make their opinions desirable and attitudes moral;
- reactive mechanisms are revealed.

A desirable sampling model consists of focus group divided into *homogeneous but contrasting subgroups*, defined in terms of "*breaking characteristics*" (Krueger, 1994). For example, a sample may be made up of women divided according to role (one *characteristic*), and social and economic status (a second *characteristic*). There must however be a limit to the number of *breaking characteristics*, a small one is ideal. It is recommended that sampling be made in view of all variables apparent in each case, as well as the objectives of the research.

The location is extremely important for information validity and investigation efficiency. This can be: a certain institutional location, the place where the participants carry out

their activity, or neutral. There is no generally valid recipe for an optimal focus group location.

As regards the *duration* of a focus group there are diverse opinions. Stewart and Shamdassni (1990) consider an hour to be minimum, whereas the maximum to be several hours, while others appreciate 30-45 minutes as minimal, and an hour and a half as maximum. Usually, standards are for 1-2 hours with adults and maximum one hour with children. Sometimes a focus group can last up to one day or half a day. In practice, the discussion is stopped the moment answer quality and respondents involvement go under a certain limit.

A focus group may be carried out in different *styles*, moderators can make recourse to several *strategies* (Bulai, 2000):

- choosing between being fun or being distant from the very beginning, since after adopting a style it is difficult to switch;
- forcing the first answers;
- provoking conflict and polarization;
- calming down disputes;
- alleviating the morality effect (depersonalisation and defactualisation of the situation);
- stimulating and inhibiting certain categories of people;
- empathy (in delicate, intimate, highly personal instances);
- “the devil’s advocate” and aggressiveness;
- neutral (equidistant treatment of the problem, neutral language).

Since the moderator is an important actor in a focus group, we will refer to some of his/her characteristics. Greenbraum (1999) classifies moderating styles according to two criteria: degree of control over the process, and degree of control over the content.

High process control	High content control		Low process control
	Segment I	Segment II	
	Segment III	Segment IV	
	Low content control		

Segment I. Standardized exchange, peculiar to highly structured interviews, face-to-face (individual).

Segment II. Beneficial to “expert” relationships (e.g.: doctor-patient; teacher-pupil).

Segment III. The moderator facilitates the most appropriate process for the focus group. The control over the content is minimal, but the aspect on which the discussion is to be centred is set beforehand.

Segment IV. Characteristic for a self-managed group. Disadvantages: possible disputes that can threaten the relationship between the participants, complete absence of thematic standardization.

Not anyone can be a good focus group moderator. There is a *moderator profile* with the main characteristics (Surdu, 2003):

I. Professional competence: being aware of methodology and interview techniques, skilled in working with and leading small groups, know the field, and be sensitive to the topic under discussion.

II. Communication skills:

- efficient active listening;
- analysis of non-verbal communication;
- negotiation;
- guiding discussion in a subtle and non-obstructive manner;
- self-revealing;
- open (empathy, but objectivity and detachment);
- enhancing the process (“incomplete understanding” mimicry, but not ignorance);
- expressivity of feelings and emotions;
- communication management;
- conflict management;
- questions aiming to assess the mental or emotional state of the respondents;
- using in questions (“How did that make you feel...? What did you think...?”).

III. Personality traits: extrovert, dynamic, communicative, active, strong, sense of humour, narrative qualities, empathy, emotional expressivity, spontaneity, being aware of one’s perception errors, etc.

The moderator has also a very important role in handling difficult persons in the focus group. In these cases, there are active techniques to block the tendency of some to pose as experts and present their opinions as facts. A rule can be adopted that any categorical opinion should be explained to the group and we thus use the group to handle such opinions. Quiet members must be encouraged to speak, and talkative members may be tempered.

Function of a series of variables (moderator, means, characters involved) we have several types of focus group (www.infomass.ro):

- a. *Two Way Focus group* consists of two groups where an interactive one analyses the other and discusses the interaction observed, on the basis of which conclusions will be drawn. This will be analysed distinctly (“Focus group to focus group”).
- b. *Focus group with two convergent moderators* has one moderator who ensures the efficient unfolding of the meeting (seizes non-verbal reactions, encourages the free flow of ideas, etc.), while the other is concerned with staying close to the pre-established pattern.
- c. *Focus group with two divergent moderators* is a qualitative research where the two intentionally differ in their opinions, so as to encourage respondents to choose one side of the demonstration or the other. Implicitly they will motivate their choices, and thus the number of non-answers will be reduced significantly. In addition, half the pressure on the group will dissipate if respondents are more concerned with expressing their opinions and choosing sides than with what the group thinks of their opinions. They will know that whatever the side, at least one other person agrees with them and they will therefore not hesitate to express their opinion as freely as possible.
- d. *Focus group with respondent moderators* is a group where one or more respondents are asked to play the part of moderator for a while. The disadvantages are that it can only be applied in societies open to such an exercise. Only extremely communicative, assertive and uninhibited people can take part in a focus group that becomes a real game both for respondents and the moderator (who will silently observe and intervene only when needed).
- e. *Client Focus group* is characterized by the presence of one or more representatives of the organizational client(s). This type of research is characteristic for sociologists and psychologists.
- f. *Mini Focus group* has only 4 or 5 participants instead of 8-12, as with the traditional focus group. The answers will be fewer, but more concentrated and unitary. The disadvantage is that the cost is similar to that of a traditional focus group, and the information poorer.

- g. *Teleconference and Online Focus group* is based on modern means of communication. Both *Teleconference*, and *Online* are qualitative research, used when respondents cannot be replaced by other members of the population (their opinions being extremely important), or when respondents previously selected are far from each other and cannot meet under any circumstances.

For a focus group to take place properly, a good moderator and a certain number of participants are not enough. Support means:

- h. *Observers*. Their role is to observe the participants and note down their statements or gesture on throughout the focus.
- i. *Audio and/or video recording means*. All the movements and words of the participants are recorded both video and audio. The actual work only begins after the end of the focus group; the analysis is difficult and lengthy. Tapes are viewed several times over, and the contents of the participants' words especially analysed, without forgetting however their facial expression, gestures, and mimic. Solid knowledge of psychology, as well as much experience is needed to decant the information obtained in this kind of focus group.
- j. *Unidirectional windows*. So as not to perturb the focus group, unidirectional windows can be used; thus, the participants will not feel incommode and will be able to act naturally.

Processing, analysis and interpretation of the information resulting from the focus group is an extremely important stage. The better structured and coherent has the procedure been so far, the easier the analysis and interpretation. An aspect that should not be overlooked is using a *system of pair focus group*, which requires holding at least two focus groups, with the same sample and interview guide. This fact will contribute to obtaining more clear and eloquent information on the issues considered.

There are several perspectives of analysing and interpreting the data in the focus group. One version is *data cropping* (Bulai, 2000):

- *Thematic cropping*: identifying the topics debated that are not identical with the ones proposed by the researcher in the guide.
- *Hypothesis cropping*: rearranging the material function of the relevance of the respective data to the research hypotheses.
- *Participant category cropping*: the data is grouped according to a certain category of representative subjects.

Another interpretation technique is *content analysis* (Janis, 1953); the analysis can be:

- *pragmatic*:
 - it requires regrouping the data function of possible causes or effects induced by the particular use of a sign (word, topic, attribute),

- it is used when only *signs* (particular significance in the text) are classified;
- *semantic*: it requires classifying signs according to the content / significance; the signs may need:
 - *frequency analysis*: the number of instances of a concept / name / institution is counted,
 - *attribute analysis*: the frequency of attributes or characterizations is sought and analysed,
 - *assessment analysis*: targets the way reference subjects (people, institutions, events) take on particular attributes;
- *sign-related*: the use of certain words, irrespective of their significance, is looked into, and only the use of a certain key word is recorded, usually with connotations in the emotional register that can give an insight with respect to the inner state of the respondents.

The analysis of information obtained from the focus group must also centre on *observation and assessment of the participants* by certain criteria, such as: attitude pro or against the matter; degree of interest for the topic; level of competence with regard to the problem; focusing on an emotional or rational style; analysis of the manifest and latent content of answers; analysis of the interactions between group members.

Target population

Participants:

- *young people (girls and/or boys)* in the process of choosing / developing a professional career. By constructing groups of girls only, boys only, or mixed (in various proportions), different group dynamics can be obtained, diverse opinions and therefore different results;
- *young people and parents* presenting in public their concerns and opinions regarding the professional future of their children;
- *counsellors* who wish to debate a professional issue.

The optimal size of the group is between 6 and 8 people, with extreme limits between 5 and 12. The choice of a larger or a smaller group depends on the objectives set: in a larger group more ideas are generated, but it is more difficult to control and can fragment into

smaller groups, while a smaller group is easier to organize, the information is more easily recorded, but there is a risk that it will yield less information.

The persons included in a focus group must be as close as possible from a social and professional point of view so as to entertain open communication; age is also an important factor, in the way that big age differences between the group members can negatively influence on the communication inside the group.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Questions of general validity for the interview guide of a focus group aiming to discover the strengths and weaknesses of a person:

1. What would you change in yourself if you could? For what reason?
2. What should you do to receive a high distinction (an award)? If you were to get an award, what should you get it for?
3. What would you tell about yourself to a close friend or family member?
4. What would have been the ideal hierarchy of your characteristics? (The question is asked after the group members have put together a hierarchy of that person's characteristics).
5. Can you mention five of your positive features / aspects however insignificant? (The question is asked if participants are noticed to be making negative statements about themselves).
6. If you had to advertise yourself, what would you lay stress upon?
7. If you were the moderator, what would you ask yourself now?

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- more information on a given subject can be generated;
- respondents are given the opportunity to express in detail their feelings, opinions, and attitudes;
- it shows what certain people really think about a certain issue;
- it is an opportunity to express reactions on the spot;

- questions such as “What if?” can be asked;
- ideas and interests initially disregarded can be generated;
- relatively inexpensive.

Disadvantages:

- the results are not representative for all the people in a category, in other words commentaries or opinions are generated that cannot be extended to the majority;
- limited number of questions;
- some people can dominate others, affecting the balance;
- interaction within the group may generate conflicts, domination, idea contagion;
- the arrangement of topics may affect reactions.

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Group Discussion

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History

Group discussion is one of the classical methods employed in career counselling. It initially emerged as a method with a lower degree of complexity, but in time it was perfected and numerous variants developed, such as Phillips 6/6 put forth by Donald Phillips in 1948 (Zlate, 1982).

Theoretical background

Group discussion requires the participatory involvement of group members in communication. Active participation is a strategy enhancing the development of a climate of trust, it raises the interest to work with a team, and helps share knowledge.

Discussion has the meaning of a reciprocal and organized exchange of information and ideas, impressions and opinions, criticism and proposals around a topic or a matter, with the following purpose:

- in-depth examination and common clarification of certain ideas;
- consolidation and systematisation of the data that participants have had knowledge of;
- solving complex theoretical and practical issues that offer several alternatives;
- developing the capacity of verbal expression, etc.

Discussion seeks to put to use as much as possible from the knowledge experience and intellectual capacities of participants, with a view to progress in learning and development. In-group discussions, psychological and social communication theories are applied: the participants present and explain, analyse and interpret, reject or accept ideas and solutions, make decisions and adopt attitudes.

In what follows we shall analyse a series of discussion types defined in order to facilitate the preservation of a minimum internal coherence. But let us first classify group discussions:

a) By Cerghit (1997), group discussion takes the following forms:

- dialogue discussion – of the consultation type (e.g.: when there is a controversy);
- discussion of the seminar and pre-seminar type;
- mass discussion (large number of participants);
- round table;
- Phillips 6/6;
- brainstorming;
- guided discussion (on previously announced key topics);
- free discussion.

b) Zlate (1982) refers to the following types:

- progressive or evolving discussion;
- free discussion;
- risk technique;
- Phillips 6/6;
- discussion panel.

The main condition of a successful discussion is *previously acquainting the participants with the topic*. *Auxiliary materials* (boards, graphs, plans, photographs, projected images,

etc.) may greatly enhance the discussion progress. In addition, the *setting* itself adds to the success of the method.

In-group discussions, various questions are asked corresponding to the contextual needs of the group. We present a few such questions and a series of examples:

Nr.	Question type	Characteristics	Examples
1	Frontal (<i>general or overview</i>)	Addressed to the entire group	<i>What is the cause for...? Why...?</i>
2	Direct	Addressed to a certain participant	<i>What makes you support / reject ...?</i>
3	Inversed (<i>redirected</i>)	Addressed to the moderator by a participant and returned	<i>X: What happens if...? Y: What do you think...?</i>
4	Channel and communication	The answer is finalized by the others	<i>X: Don't you however feel that ...? Y: X has raised an interesting question. What do you think?</i>
5	Come-back	The moderator takes up a previously launched remark that was ill-timed	<i>X has previously said that How do you think it can be influenced by ...?</i>
6	Imperative	Categorical and unconditioned request	<i>Please give us your opinion in brief. Analyse the following case ... What are the differences?</i>
7	Controversial	Presupposes contradictory answers in key matters	<i>Is talent inherited or cultivated? Are genies born or trained?</i>

Three main parts of the discussion are apparent (Zlate, 1982):

- *introduction to the debate* – formulation of the issue underlining the theoretical and practical importance, including the difficulties;
- *the debate itself* – whatever participants say;
- *result synthesis* – systematisation of conclusions and arguments reached; underlining new contributions.

Below, we present in detail a series of group discussion types with their particularities.

Method presentation

a. Free discussion

Free discussion is an instrument for expressing opinions and feelings on other people, situations, or events. Group members are reunited and asked to express frankly, openly and detached whatever they feel and think, whatever displeases them or makes them

behave in a certain way within a group (cooperation or conflict, conformism or deviance, participative or non-participative, etc.). The aim of free discussion is not necessarily to solve negative group moods or suggest solutions. The simple discharge of tension by exposing their troubles has important effects. Such a discharge is equal to an implicit solution to difficult situations or at least creates the premises of a subsequent solution. Free discussion thus has two categories of effects:

- brings everything to light; makes opinions and attitudes public; helps members know each other better and then act accordingly;
- creates the premises of tension and conflict solving in the group. Unlike progressive discussion, whose purpose is to make thought pass methodically from one matter to another, free discussion is allowed to wander in order to give all members the opportunity to express.

Free discussion is group-centred, essential being here the interaction between all group members – which is to the maximum, while the interaction between group members and moderator is secondary – and minimal. The tasks of the leader are entirely different than in the progressive discussion (as we shall see below):

- seeks to *enhance communication*, discretely stimulate interaction between participants, using either verbal means (“How do you feel about what has been said?”), or non-verbal (nods, prompting looks);
- *listens attentively*, respecting everyone’s right to express what they want;
- *encourages* group members to express themselves, to present their thoughts, directs them towards feelings, attitudes and opinions, and less towards persons, ideas, facts;
- *re-expresses* certain moods already expressed in order to point them out;
- *quiets down resentments*, gives minority the possibility of being listened to;
- *sums up* the discussion, guides the agreement / disagreement towards issues discussed and not towards individuals involved in the debate.

Using free discussion in career counselling is recommendable, since it has a series of evident positive effects:

- outlines a constructive attitude of the group members, even if no efficient solutions are provided. Sometimes such solutions are not even needed, since attitude can change throughout the discussion;
- leads to the awareness upon the causes of tensed and conflictual situations in the group, favouring their resolve;

- enhances change of opinions and behaviours (more easily done in a group than individually). Attitude change in a group is done gradually, without the individual losing ground;
- increases group cohesion.

Free discussion cannot be used in any circumstances, only when:

- group members are in the course of decision-making;
- some fears appear as obstacles to action;
- the group is divided;
- there are latent tensions which are not apparently motivated by anything acute;
- training programmes are held (when it is not known how people feel on a certain matter).

Even if free discussion does not always result in positive effects, it creates the favourable psychological state for their emergence, which is not to be neglected.

b. Progressive / evolving discussion

Progressive discussion requires the organization of debates in such a manner as to obtain progress, evolution, from a sequence to the next, from a moment to the next, so that a solution is obtained in the end. It is therefore necessary to guide participants towards a certain outcome, assign particular tasks formulated gradually, and only after other elements have been solved in a satisfactory manner. The method consists in an exchange of ideas and information in a group, with the aid of a leader / moderator on a topic. The central person in such a discussion is *the discussion leader*, who has maximum interaction with all group members, while interaction between the members is minimal. The leader is the one who:

- launches the general problem for discussion, as well as the particular matter derived from it, which constitute the topic of the discussion;
- receives all answers and reactions of the group members and suitably answers requests;
- invites everyone by word and action to participate, get involved in problem-solving, and reflect on the matter;
- focuses collective reflection on the debate (guides it towards what is essential, sums up once in a while important contributions, etc.).

The discussion leader must previously have a plan of written questions, and participants must know the topic beforehand, so as to inform themselves and later intervene in

discussion. The progressive discussion is not improvised dialogue, nor a type of knowledge assessment, but a learning technique through active participation in the debate and elaboration of multiple ideas. The topic must be “discussible”, even if not in itself; no predictable answers or previously learned are sought, but interpretations and elaborations that develop judgement on one’s own criteria.

The “Yes-no” questions ought to be avoided. The number of participants must not exceed 12-13. In case of larger groups, smaller sub-groups may be formed, guided by competent persons, and a general summary will be presented at the end. Such discussions can yield good results if applied in 45-60 minute sessions. It is not necessary for the participants to take notes, especially since it may distract them.

The progressive discussion should take place as follows (Zlate, 1982):

1. Outlining of a few general ideas, upon which group members will agree easily (setting rules, criteria, etc.).
2. Guiding the participants’ thoughts towards a particular matter, which once solved leaves room for another.
3. The problem to solve is divided into sub-problems to enhance same aspects. This way it will be easy to localize the points of disagreement, naturally progressing from one aspect to another.

The progressive discussion cannot be used in any situation; the method is valuable and efficient under the following *conditions*:

- the group has sufficient experience to participate in the discussion;
- the experience of group members is adequate to the aspects under discussion;
- the problem is formulated so as to allow progress from a stage to the next;
- there is resistance to the progress expected. For a real debate, the topic must be “*uncertain / debatable*”, in order to be analysed from various perspectives; there is no point in discussing general truths or evident things.

The utility of progressive discussion is extremely varied. Thus, it may be used with high profit in the following *situations*:

- *performing studies and explorations of ideas* with regard to which there are no optimal implementation circumstances in the beginning (the members do not agree to their application, but their refusal is not based on rational but emotional arguments);
- *decision-making*, when opting for one of several alternatives;
- *training and perfecting programmes*.

The progressive discussion, through its structured character, proves to be efficient both to stimulate participants in the discussion, and to obtain quality results in unexplored situations.

c. Phillips 6/6

Phillips proposed this group discussion technique in 1948. He suggested dividing the large group into smaller units, composed of 6 people, who will discuss a matter of general interest or urgency for 6 minutes. The technique is based both on association and combination, and belongs to the creative methods. Phillips 6/6 is especially suitable for groups of more than 20 people, since allows the active participation of a large number of people, thus obtaining the opinions of all group members in a very short time. The main objective is reaching a democratic participation in the discussion of large groups' members. In addition, Phillips 6/6 allows a thought synthesis for each 6-member group that will then be transmitted for the benefit of the large group.

Positioning of members during the debate plays an important part in the process. Here are a few suggestions (Zlate, 1982):

a. *Placing around a rectangular table with the leader at the top* is the most frequent. As it can be noticed in Figure 1, each participant develops interactions within the team, to the same extent with all members, including the leader.

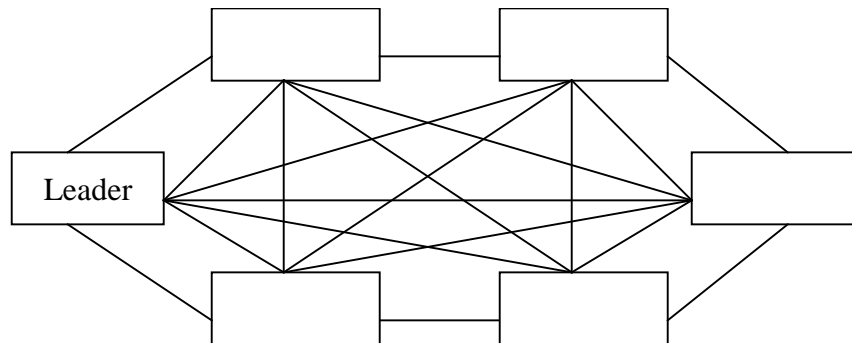


Figure 1

b. *Positioning around a rectangular table with the leader on one of the sides*. Such a positioning deprives the leader of the authority above, but brings group members closer by shortening the social distance between them and leader. It also makes away with visual dominance monopoly; in the new position not all members are under direct observation all the time (when looking at 1 and 2, he/she does not see 4 and 5).

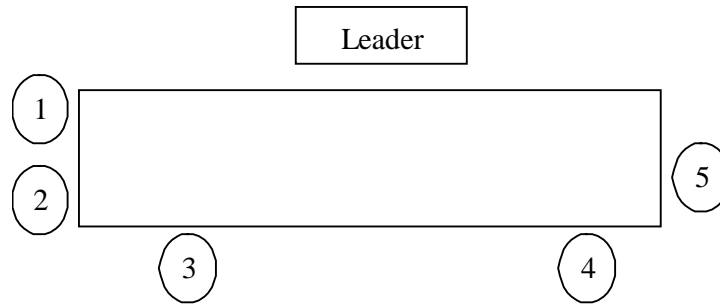


Figure 2

c. *Placing the leader in the corner of the room.* Such a position leads to the best management and the best interactions between group members.

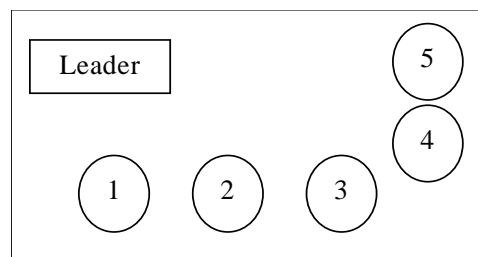


Figure 3

d. *Placing all in a circle.* The leader is equal to the group members. Authority is thus discouraged and group interactions are maxim.

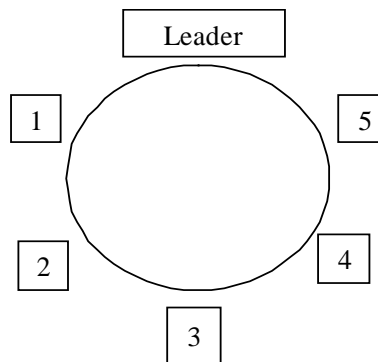


Figure 4

Since it is a rather elaborated group discussion technique, Phillips 6/6 has a series of standard procedures enumerated below (Zlate, 1982):

a. *The group leader announces the topic*, making sure it is clearly delimited and phrased. Usually the discussion focuses on problems requiring:

- establishing causes or solutions to certain problems;
- formulating problems to be brought to someone's attention;
- making a decision, establishing a means of action.

b. *Dividing a larger group into smaller ones*, of 6 people each. Such a group chooses:

- *a leader*, who will enhance the strive for solutions;
- *a secretary*, who has the task of writing down on paper the solutions reached in order to present them, in the end, to the general leader of the discussion group; the existence of a secretary is not compulsory; the secretary's tasks can be taken over by the leader.

c. *The discussion as such in groups*. It is important to *make each participant active*, as well as to make sure the moderator will fulfil the role assigned without forcing his or her opinions on the members. This stage can take two forms:

- *free discussion* – each group member expresses an opinion and only the contributions agreed to by the entire group are kept;
- *progressive discussion* – one group member expresses an opinion that is then analysed by everyone; should the group agree to it, it is written down by the group secretary, otherwise it is eliminated; a similar procedure is followed for the opinions of the other group members in turn.

d. *The solutions written down in small groups are handed over to the general leader once the 6 minutes are up*. There are two possibilities:

- the secretary hands the leader the sheet with the group's answers;
- the secretary announces the answers of his/her group.

e. *Group members issue opinions and present solutions*:

- critical analysis is admitted;
- initially each subgroup keeps its own solutions, but some are gradually discarded and the remaining ones may win majority;
- the majority solution in some sub-groups, confronted with other solution in other subgroup, may lose weight;
- new solutions may come up, that have not been written down by any subgroup;
- valuable ideas will be highlighted.

f. *The leader's synthesis*:

- the leader will sum up or classify the various proposals.

d. Panel discussion

The principle of this method is using a small group of individuals in view of studying a problem, while the audience intervenes through written messages.

The method is employed in order to avoid the setting in of a negative psychological state, especially when the group is large and there arises the necessity of informing all members on some difficult issues to be solved by a common decision.

A group in a panel discussion has the following composition:

- *jury or panel*: a group of experts – composes of 5-7 qualified and competent people regarding the topics;
- *audience*;
- *animator* or discussion leader.

The duration of the panel is between 1.30 hour and 3 hours.

The panel members are usually seated around a table in a half circle. The audience is sitting in front of them, in a larger half circle, so as to see and hear everything that is happening. The animator is placed between the panel and the audience, either to the right or to the left.

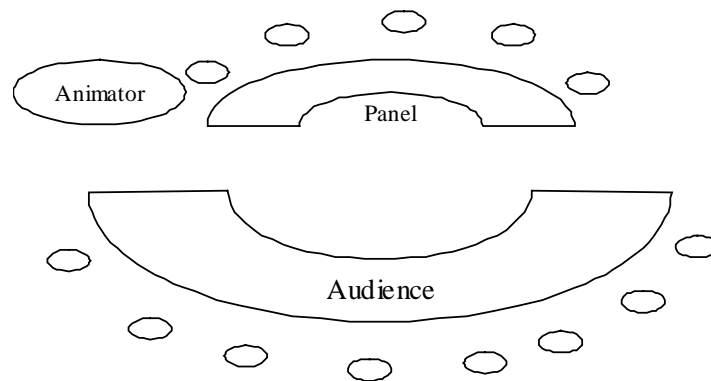


Fig. 5

Phases of panel discussion:

1. Animator *announces* the topic under discussion, insisting on its significance.

2. Animator *introduces the panel* (name, speciality, competence).
3. Animator presents a series of *organizational measures* with respect to the tasks of the panel and audience:
 - Instructions for the panel: *“you are experts in the problem to be discussed and you will analyse the opinions and suggestions of people present in audience in order to arrive to a decision. The discussion will be between us, but the audience may intervene.”*
 - Instructions for the audience: *“you may express your opinions, suggestions at any time, using one of the following modalities: 1) write down on paper what you wish the panel to discuss; 2) raise your hand every time you wish to intervene; 3) write down on paper what you wish to ask and send the note to me or one of the panel members during the discussion; 4) we will interrupt the discussion at some point for 5-10 minutes and you will then have the floor. We can agree to one or several of these possibilities.”*
4. Animator *leads the panel discussion* and attempts to involve the audience in discussion. A good animator should:
 - be competent in solving incidents that occur in using group activation methods;
 - have the professional competence required for the topic under discussion (thus, he or she will be able to rephrase certain aspects using technical terms and will be able to mark the stages of the discussion, etc.).
5. Animator will make a *synthesis* of the discussion, presenting the conclusions and highlighting important ideas or the decision.

The audience may intervene through notes sent to the “jury”. On occasion the notes are written on coloured paper: blue is for questions, white for suggestions, red for personal opinions. It is preferable that the messages not be introduced in the discussion as soon as they are sent, so as not to cut the flow of discussion.

Target population

The laws of group dynamics indicate an ideal number of 7-10 participants to the group (Paretti, 2001). If the number is too low there is not sufficient interaction and not enough ideas. If the group is too large it can be divided into sub-groups, but no unitary discussion can be held.

Number of participants	Group discussion
< 4	Impossible
5 – 6	Difficult
7 – 9	Ideal
10 – 12	Difficult
> 12	Impossible

Characteristics of participants:

- communication skills;
- availability for active listening;
- ability to understand various points of view;
- flexibility and receptiveness towards opponents and sense of adaptation to their actions.

A strong influence on the discussion is the social and emotional climate that sets in the group, atmosphere that can stimulate or inhibit. Sympathy and antipathy, cooperation or competition will reduce or amplify the advantage of the opinions expressed, accelerate or slow down the acceptance of conclusions.

In principle, there are two possibilities for a group discussion: the participants will either be similar, homogeneous, or diverse, heterogeneous. Each of these two alternatives has its pluses and minuses.

In a group discussion people with similar experience are generally used (e.g.: mothers, couples, young graduates, etc.) to treat a specific topic, of interest to them. In a homogeneous group, a relaxed atmosphere and a feeling of mutual trust are easier to create, and thus enhance communication.

A heterogeneous group may generate more ideas, increase the problem solving potential since there is a wider criticizing base, may offer more alternatives but at the same time an increased heterogeneity may have opposite effects: difficulty to establish personal relationships, settling for the handiest ideas, decrease in group cohesion, and implicit decrease in performance.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Fragment of a discussion: woman, 25 years old.

“I don’t know what to do... I can’t tell whether I should stay in my current job. I can hardly stand the work, but it is stable and the salary is good. Or maybe I should just

forget it and do something I am really interested in ... I may end up badly, with a very low salary ... and I don't even know if I am up to it ..."

Possible answers:

1. Can you tell me more about what you really wish at present? It is important to reflect on the matter (investigation on the person).
2. We can apply some tests that will allow you to weigh your chances in the new field you are interested in. Moreover, we could examine some of the aspects you are currently dissatisfied with (supportive behaviour).
3. Your hesitation is understandable, since it is caused by your uncertainty regarding the choice of a new activity and abandoning the old one, to which the reluctance to give up your security is added (cooperative interpretation behaviour).
4. It is indeed a tough choice to make, isn't it? (reverberation, sympathy).

The discussion analysis may prove useful only if systematic and organized. Below, an analysis model.

Topic	Facts, situations, events	Environment, context	Behaviour, capacities	Needs, motivations, interests	Results
	What?	Where? When?	How?	Why?	
Professional situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job change • not enough resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a small city in Romania • social isolation • few jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resistance to routine • hesitation in applying a solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looking for a job • more interesting activity • need to make more money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sense of responsibility • active person • sociable • latent dynamism

Method evaluation

Advantages of Phillips 6/6:

- allows all group members to take part in the discussion;
- it is overall activating, since it increases the interest and attention of participants, incites and stirs them;

- it is useful to quickly obtain opinions elaborated by sub-groups, partial agreements reached, suggestions made, etc.; it quickly yields a wide range of solutions;
- accustoms group members to the technique of argumentation, supporting or discarding opinions;
- favours a representative decision-making manner for various tendencies within a group;
- favours confrontation of individual perceptions and acceptance of their complementarity with those of the group;
- can be used in classes to find out the general information level of pupils on a topic;
- many class activities can be evaluated;
- develops synthesis abilities;
- contributes to defeating the fear of speaking in public, and stimulates the sense of responsibility.

Disadvantages of Phillips 6/6:

- work groups might interfere with each other when there is not room enough;
- additional time is spent on presenting the results of each group;
- the aspects selected from the viable alternatives may be unsystematic.

Advantages of Panel:

- ensures participation of a large number of members of various social groups in decision-making, solving problems of general interest, and is thus an excellent way to democratically elaborate solutions;
- allows reciprocal information of group members on common issues, as well as their direct involvement in their solution;
- leads to an increased participation in group life, strengthening the feeling of attachment to it, and an increase in personal and collective responsibility of putting decisions into practice;
- triggers emotional aspects of an issue;
- supports participants in arguing their point of view in relation to the opinions of other members.

Disadvantages of Panel:

- discussion may be monopolized by a few;
- due to its complexity, it is not easy to apply (an experienced moderator is needed).

Advantages of Group discussion:

- creates an open, receptive and friendly atmosphere, giving more people the opportunity to express their opinions;
- favours cooperation in view of solving problems;
- ensures the transfer of knowledge from one situation to others;
- stimulates initiative and responsible participation in the multilateral and in-depth clarification of issues;
- cultivates appropriate expression of personal opinions;
- stimulates spontaneity and creativity of ideas;
- decisions made as a consequence of discussions are more based, accurate, and easier accepted by group members.

Disadvantages of Group discussion:

- a time interval is necessary to prepare the topic and the questions;
- creates defensive attitudes, of avoidance or wandering from the main issue;
- leaves room for subjectivity in opinions;
- some have a tendency to monopolize the discussion and impose their own point of view.

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Computer-assisted Information and Guidance

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History

Information has been one of the most widespread functions of computers ever since the first applications of information and communications technology. But it was first fully exploited as a consequence of the development of technology and computer network infrastructure (the United States, 1968). These allowed the immediate transmission of information at minimal costs between any two points connected by Internet on the globe. In 1995 the Internet had 40 million users with a 20 second increase rate per subscriber (Compagnon, 2000). It is currently estimated that there are a few hundred million faithful users of the Internet, the percentage of regular computer users being on the increase, and ICT competence has become an essential indicator of general competence.

Theoretical background

Information technology can make the process of information transmission and presentation more efficient for several reasons: automatic design, fast multiplication and transmission at minimal costs, and increased security; interactive, friendly and personalized interfaces that will increase effectiveness of the information process.

Information in career can be performed through *asynchronic technologies* such as web pages, web forums, e-mail, and *synchronic technologies* such as chat, videoconference, or telephone conversation. The contents of a web page can be accessed either online as

many times as needed, or downloaded and used offline, or multiplied and distributed on electronic support (floppy disk, CD-ROM, external memory). Selecting the adequate technology is done function of the objectives and the target group.

Using computers in career information is justified by two essential benefits: maximization of learning opportunities, and facilitating access to counselling resources (Sampson, 2000).

Maximization of learning opportunities. It is a result of the increased interactivity and flexibility in the virtual environment, by the possibility of selecting the media resources appropriate to user's personal learning style, by removing blockages caused by low transfer speed, which would considerably diminish motivation.

Facilitating access to counselling resources. Information plays an essential part in career guidance, and one of the most common uses of the Internet is, according to Sampson (2000) "*exploring employment opportunities, career alternatives, and test assessment*". From an ethical point of view, there is the problem of giving access to these resources considering the reality of *digital division* and the danger of deepening discrepancies. Some people have difficulties in working with computers or navigating on the Internet and this is why they prefer to seek counselling.

In a traditional career guidance centre, the introduction of a web page information service raises the problem of the pertinence with regard to the target population. Once the service launched, a counsellor no longer bears the burden of repeatedly informing various clients of the same thing, since electronic information is easy to access and unlimited, at any time and from anywhere, by a large range of beneficiaries, etc.

According to the definition of the target group to which web sites are addressed, *specific or general information and counselling services* can be offered (Sampson, 2000). General services are addressed to a wide target group whose members are perfectly aware of their needs and do not require thematic counselling, only answers to general questions. Specific services on the other hand are addressed to individual clients or more clearly defined groups and require individualized intervention and offering answers to individual requests. The role of the web site is complementary to other guidance resources and must answer, according to Sampson (2001), the strategic objectives of the counselling centre.

A necessary condition to favourable career-related decision-making is represented by relevant information on the self, and educational and professional opportunities. This requires processing a large amount of information. Computers are at present the most adequate instrument to store and manipulate this kind of information.

Certain information needed by clients in career-related decision-making pertain to local or regional circumstances, and cannot consequently fall in the responsibility of national authorities. It is therefore necessary to develop searching systems for educational and professional information relevant at regional or local level that can be used by schools in the area. Such an application would offer useful information to clients in making professional decision, as well as to authorities and teachers in the development of a relevant curriculum for the local labour market.

Comparative empirical research between texts saturated with details and texts only containing the main ideas (eliminating 40% of the initial contents) indicate that information retention is the same and the duration of navigation is much less in the case of succinct texts (Istrate, 2003). This aspect clearly denotes the effectiveness of well-structured pages. Research on the way information on a page is read shows that in European and American cultures eyes follow a Z-forms trajectory. The implication of this leads to a recommendation that the most important information be placed at the beginning and at the end of the page.

Method presentation

Career information can make use of several information technologies function of the context and purpose. For sets of information of general interest, the most appropriate modality is a web page. It has the advantage that once created and posted, the information can be accessed at any time, from any place, without counsellor intervention. In exchange, for specific information, a client may request help through e-mail or synchronic communication channels (chat, telephone or video-conference).

Information and guidance through web pages

1. Designing counselling web sites. An adequate design of a web site will determine its effectiveness both for *self-information*, and *counsellor-assisted information*. According to the aim the designer had in mind, web sites can have three different functions:

- promoting traditional counselling services;
- offering information possibilities by downloading simple text files;
- furnishing resources and services that directly respond to requests, after the accurate identification of the target population and its potential needs.

When counsellors wish to integrate an information and guidance web site into their service offer, it is recommended to follow these implementation steps: analysis of counselling service, web site development, integrating the web site into the existing service, staff training, use, and assessment (Sampson, 2001).

As regards the actual development of an information and guidance web site, the following steps are taken: setting aims, identifying target groups, need analysis, design, realization, assessment, obtaining a web address, launching, and updating.

Setting aims. A site can specialize in employment opportunities, education or training institutions, or various other information types, or integrate all these types of information, classifying them as such.

Identifying target groups. When a web page is addressed to a clearly identified target group (pupils, parents, teachers, people at risk, etc.), it is easy to compile gender-specific, age-specific, or adapted contents to the social and economic context. Although most members in the target group will not encounter difficulties in use, there are disabled clients or who lack competence, time or equipment. The finer-grained the differences within the target group (e.g. a site exclusively destined to the physically challenged), the more difficult the adaptation to their needs.

Online need identification. Adequate structure of the menus, as well as the list of *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQ) allow finding the desired information or guide users to the necessary information, whether it is on the respective web site, a link to another specialized site, or referral to a physical counselling centre.

In order to obtain useful information to subsequently improve the web site, there will be a *search track*, with a view to identifying navigation styles.

Designing web sites. From the point of view of the strategy adopted in web designing we distinguish between *resource-based* and *need-based*. A principle of counselling effectiveness is to offer clients exactly the requested information or services, and in the optimal quantity. There is thus the issue of not over-burdening with information or under-informing, and the web site can be a filter for clients in greater need of individual help towards counsellors for a face-to-face session, and for those capable of self-information towards the most appropriate online resources.

Differences in principle between need-based strategy and resource-based strategy are summed up by Sampson (2000) in the following table:

Need-based design	Resource-based design
Start from the hypothesis that:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • users do not know their information needs • clients do not have the necessary abilities to identify on their own the relevant information in the structure of the site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • users already know what they want to know or they can tell without any difficulty if shown what is available
Follows the steps:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying target groups • identifying target users' needs • making a specific design of the contents so as to adequately respond to users' needs • relating needs to relevant resources and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying generic target groups • selecting resources adequate to the target group • structuring the site after the simple logic of available resources
Navigation:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interactive process requiring several clicks to find the appropriate resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finding the desired information is possible through direct access or search facilities, indices or frequently asked question lists
Site structure:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stratified, with multiple search levels and complex information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simple, direct access to all available resources

The choice of design must be made, according to Sampson, function of the policy, objectives, and specificity of the counselling services. The most frequent information and counselling web site development modality is taking into account both strategies by ensuring the ease of relevant resource finding for the specific needs of each client, but also by adding indices or *FAQ lists*, maps / structure of the site and search facilities.

In the design process, one should always consider the user's perspective. The user must always be supported through help texts and tips, error messages, and the information presented must meet a series of exigencies such as: *accuracy*, *consistency*, *wholeness*, *comprehensibility*, and *structuring* (Hagglund, 1989, apud. Istrate, 2003). Error messages must be phrased in a positive manner.

The layout includes background colour, font size, images, tables, lists, as well as the way information is grouped on the screen. The visual quality of a web page is measured by *the legibility*, *clarity*, and *structuring* of the information. Inadequate or erroneous phrasing must be avoided, as well as spelling errors.

In order to ensure a high usage level, any web site requires a Help function, where the client will be instructed on how to use the various facilities of the system, guided towards the desired resources, and offered assistance in using information sources on other sites.

For an easy access to available resources, any web site includes man-computer dialogue facilities, known as user interface.

Designing user interface. The quality of interactive systems is judged by the easy use (Berndtsson and Ottersten, 2002, apud Mjornheden, 2004). In order to evaluate how user-friendly a computer system is, Hagglund and Vainio-Larsson (1989, apud Mjornheden, 2004), suggested four investigation directions: user, task, system, and environment. The factors conditioning the use level are: adaptability, flexibility, friendliness, user competence, and system robustness:

- *adaptability* presupposes designing system facilities so as to allow optimal user-computer interaction;
- *flexibility of the system* targets the permanent possibility of changing the course of the investigation function of the needs and particularities of an individual, keeping to the scientific character of the contents;
- *user-friendliness* involves, for Alwood (apud Mjornheden, 2004), a few essential aspects such as: availability of the system, user-computer compatibility, the possibility of individual navigation, help quality;
- *satisfaction* in using the system and its *acceptability* are essential for the effectiveness of use; without appropriate motivation a user will never learn how the system works and consequently the effectiveness will be compromised;

- *user competence* targets the user's capacity to interact with computers; the design must take into account the visitor's learning capacity. The navigation results must be predictable, understandable even by a novice, facilitate learning, and allow the transfer of new acquisitions to other situations;
- *robustness* refers to the system not blocking on incorrect use, while signalling and correcting the error.

Many potential problems of an information system can be identified through testing on a small number of users. Nielsen (apud Mjornheden, 2004) believes 85% of troubles can be uncovered by a user test on merely five persons.

The increase of computer system use is the object of *HCI – Computer-Human Interaction*. The aim of the research is adapting technology to user needs, by understanding the human limitations and conditions. Thus, designing an interface cannot do without knowledge of how human sight, memory, and thinking operate (Berndtsson and Ottersten, 2002, apud Mjornheden, 2004).

Laws	Implications for design
Visual	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sight and perception are partially controlled by experience and interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminating all unessential elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information presented on a screen is easier to read and identify if the eye can follow a row • normally, reading a text is 20-30% slower on the screen than on paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating texts and links that should help a client read fast and identify relevant content • clear description of the links • using large font and avoid italics for links • coherent and systematic presentation of information
Memory	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short-term memory is very limited and operates with a small number of information units • it is much easier to recognize information than remember it • long-term memory uses associations to evoke things that provide users with a list of eligible options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concise presentation without useless details • adapting the vocabulary to clients' specificity • anchor ideas facilitating the understanding of new information
Thinking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thinking depends on other mental functions (emotions, interests, etc.) • handling information is sequential and thought cannot operate with too much information simultaneously • people excel in information assessment and problem systematisation according to categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full use of users' knowledge • creating homogeneous interface: the same concept must look the same everywhere • users must be helped finding a pattern or a structure for the way the system works • stimulating exploratory capacity facilitates learning • relevant feedback to understand the interface

User profile represents an important factor in the process of developing information and counselling web pages. The beneficiary of Internet counselling services is an abstract construct and the danger may arise that the counselling service fails to respond to concrete needs.

Internet user behaviour. The research of the Poynter Institute on the way users read information on the Internet reveals a series of important characteristics (Istrate, 2003):

- due to the large volume of existing information the great majority of users (approximately 3/4) mainly *skim-read diagonally* (just the table of contents or abstract), and when they identify relevant information they make recourse to selective probing. Consequently, web site designers must structure information so as to allow quick identification and finding details for a specific issue;
- very frequently users *hunt for information and ignore details*;
- when first accessing a page, *the user's eyes focus on the text*, identifying titles, subtitles and abstracts, and ignoring images and graphs;
- often users *read several pages at once*, opening several windows and searching through them alternatively, opening various new pages, looking for web or e-mail addresses.

Principles of web design. For an effective use of web page contents, designers must take into account a series of principles (Istrate, 2003):

- *Clarity and elegance.* Contents must be presented under an accessible form, with a pleasant aspect and logical structure.
- *Predictability and regularity.* Efficient navigation with the resources pertaining to a site presupposes maintaining a constant presentation framework. Applying these principles must not generate monotony in resource use, therefore certain functional changes being justified.
- *Standardization and consistency in style.* Layout must allow quick focus with no hesitation on important elements, and formatting style must be unitary.
- *Easy orientation through the contents.* The menu and location bar must be visible permanently and indicate the current section or chapter, and allow quick access to other parts of the site. The relevant information will appear under the form of an abstract, which should not be larger than the screen, allowing the user to continue the search for further details on other pages.
- *Unity and simplicity.* Detail abundance must be avoided and where details are necessary they must be accessed through links to separate pages, so as not to confuse users who do not need them.

- *Balance and symmetry.* The constitutive elements of the page (text or list, tables, graphs, images, menus) must be distributed in a balanced manner.
- *Ordering according to importance.* Information must be presented in order of importance and relevance, from left to right and downwards in European and American cultures.
- *Grouping elements according to significance.* Different ideas should be spaced out, framed in boxes, coloured differently, etc. The more consistent the use of these grouping and labelling modalities is, the easier to distinguish and understand the various ideas.
- *Structuring contents by lists and tables.* The discursive presentation requires time to process information, but schematic presentation as lists or tables favours a quick understanding. Bulleted or numbered lists will be aligned left and vertically oriented; it is recommended that a text take up between 25 and 50% of the page.
- *Highlighting text units through attributes.* Bold, underlined, italics or different colours do highlight key words. Line spacing must correspond to text font size.
- *Introducing visual organizers.* In order to guide the user through the contents the following will be used: *page title* in the title bar; *page titles or subtitles*; *succession of menu subdivisions* that should indicate the current position in the site hierarchy and offer fast access to other sections of the site; *standard link colour*; standard terminology; marking lists of symbols for each item; presenting a single idea per paragraph.
- *Appropriate colour use.* Colours define text, as well as graphs and images; they have a clear effect on intellectual performance and the prestige of the site. An adequate colour combination has a series of positive effects on the users: facilitating understanding, receptiveness and assimilation; creating mental comfort, invigoration and good mood, alleviating intellectual fatigue; enhancing visual perception; stimulating concentration and memory; developing imagination and creative thinking.

It is recommended to avoid simple contrasts by black and white and instead using adequate chromatic combinations that lead to an increase in the precision and speed of perception and memorizing information up to 40-50%. Stronger contrast must be used for essential information and weaker for content elements. Graphs and images are much more eloquent and legible in colour. In certain cases, such as images depicting action and portraits, black and white contrast highlights the personal expression and is more suggestive.

Web sites represent an addition to traditional counselling resources and not an alternative. A web site cannot offer all traditional services at the same quality, since face-to-face interaction holds a level of complexity that cannot be simulated in a virtual world.

General information and guidance services on the web include a series of information presentation modalities:

- simple or structured hypertext informative pages;
- downloadable documents (Word, pdf);
- data bases that can be interrogated;
- multimedia resources.

Individualized services include a series of web techniques:

- standardized forms: to assist clients in the clear formulation of the information or counselling request, an online form will have to be filled in; there are certain requirements: clear statement about the qualification of counsellors who will answer the request, maximum time interval for response, data security and confidentiality policy;
- electronic discussion lists: these allow regular sending through e-mail of useful news and information to a list of users who sign up and select their interests;
- individualized accounts: password-protected access allows personalized web spaces that contain information specific to the client's needs;
- reserved web areas: unlike individualized accounts, these allow access to specific information to a limited number of users who have a username and a password. It is thus allowed to adapt information function of the geographic, social, economic context, and the requirements of user groups;
- chat: highly individualized counselling by written communication in real time;
- videoconference: distance communication in real time by means of technology, realized through simultaneous audio-video transmission, which is closest to face-to-face communication.

2. *Making it happen.* Although design presupposes a series of previous attempts, it functionally overlaps the making itself of web pages. Most often than not the final result is much different from the initial idea, and it is always open to further changes. The web page development requires a HTML (*HyperText Mark-up Language*) page editor such as *Macromedia – Dreamweaver*, *Front Page*, etc. Although the current profile of carer counsellors includes ITC competence, including web site creation, a beginner is advised to seek professional help. Once created on the personal computer, the web site will be uploaded to an Internet-connected server with a specific address, so as to be accessible online.

3. *Assessment and monitoring* A user of internet information and guidance services must be aware that existing resources vary in terms of information quality and accuracy. The most important analysis criteria and quality indicators are (Mjornheden, 2002):

- *longevity* – clues on accuracy;
- *mentioning sources* – reciprocal links to sites of relevant institutions to check information accuracy and quality;
- *authenticity* – information on the organization or person developing the web site, counsellor competence and qualifications, contact data that should allow verification through other sources;
- *impartiality* (objectivity) – mentioning the purpose and costs of various services that should allow a realistic assessment of their utility, and the existence of alternatives that better answer user purpose;
- *global perspective* – clarity of target groups, referring uninformed visitors to other sites more adequate to their needs, ensuring transparency regarding social and cultural aspects, so as to avoid resentment and frustration in certain groups;
- *credibility* – argument pertinence, justifying and balancing contents, clarity of the truth value attached to the information presented (distinguishing between facts and opinions).

In view of the permanently changing social and economic context, quality assurance of information services presupposes constant monitoring, assessment, and improvement of efficiency. In order to obtain information on the degree of use and the nature of services, a series of modalities are employed:

- direct and explicit feedback from clients by online questionnaires;
- recording the number of users by logs or counters;
- extracting user URL (to identify country and region or town/city, e-mail provider, etc.);
- duration of connection;
- most and least visited pages;
- duration of connection (percent by each entry);
- the most looked-for key-words (if the site has an inner search engine);
- access origin (from a site, search engine) and navigation software (*browser*).

Many of these data can be recorded automatically by adequately setting the server of the counselling centre and then using them to compile statistics and useful comparisons for improving efficiency and effectiveness of the information and guidance web service.

E-mail information and guidance

Counselling and guidance services often combine web pages that present general information with more personalized services such as e-mail (telephone or chat). Compared to information through web pages, e-mail has the advantage of answering closer to client's needs, leading to a reconsideration of the counselling concept and a change in the way the process is carried by counsellors *substituting* or *completing* the rest of counselling services. As regards client-counsellor interaction, it can be **asynchronous** – with temporal gap – through e-mail, forums, mail, Internet, or **synchronous** – no temporal gap-telephone, teleconference, or videoconference).

The British researcher Marcus Offer considers that the main exigencies of the e-mail counselling process pose the following requirements on the counsellor:

Before opening e-mail:

- clearly setting the aims of e-mail use and informing clients thereof (information request, counselling, contact enhancement, etc.);
- clarifying situations and persons eligible for e-mail answers;
- informing clients on confidentiality limits;
- awareness of necessary time budget for e-mail guidance, which requires as much time as face-to-face meetings or telephone conversations;
- using an institutional e-mail address, to avoid the flood of spam, viruses, and unprofessional aspects;
- ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the guidance process by previously requesting clients to fill in a simple questionnaire in order to clarify the problem and provide minimal data;
- keeping and sorting e-mail correspondence for reference.

On opening e-mail:

- allotting sufficient time for answer (e-mail offers the necessary time to answer request, consult with other practitioners and formulate a complete answer);
- allotting reasonable time to correctly and completely identify the client's needs, analyse the current situation, interests, how to satisfy these interests, as well as risks, barriers, alternatives, etc.

Preparing an answer:

- first practicing informal written communication with colleagues in the counselling centre, in a succinct and clear manner, but warm and friendly at the same time;
- preparing and saving answers for Frequently Asked Questions – FAQ; selecting and copying them for efficient time use;
- constantly checking personal perceptions by consulting other colleagues;
- offering pertinent information, avoiding redundancy or unsolicited information;
- developing empathic relationship with the client, anticipating his/her reaction to reading the answer;
- simulating a certain level of interactivity by a moderate use of quotation in the original message followed by the personal answer;
- respecting web design principles in order to make sure that the important aspects are the first to be perceived;
- using common language, no acronyms, technical terms, omissions or spelling errors, etc.

After e-mail information and counselling:

- keeping e-mail correspondence safe, since e-mail messages represent a valuable means of communication from the point of view of professional relationship and development.

Target population

Electronic means of information are first addressed to functionally literate people, but the graphic and intuitive means are also understandable to people with rather intuitive learning styles or even preschoolers and people with special needs.

Examples, exercises, case studies

PLOTEUS – *European Educational Opportunities Portal* (<http://europa.eu.int/ploteus>) is a unitary instrument to explore learning offers in the European Union, launched in 2003. It is developed and updated by the Euroguidance network with the support of the European Commission. It aims to answer through relevant and accurate information the

increased information needs on educational opportunities in the European space. Unlike the various search engines on the Internet, PLOTEUS allows users to investigate in an easy and quick manner the market of training offers of any level and duration, and local information centres according to the following criteria: language of web presentation, language of tuition, geographic location, educational field. In addition, a comparative analysis of the result obtained is possible, allowing thus the identification of the educational institution function of personal preference. There is a friendly interface in 24 European languages. PLOTEUS is structured in five chapters.

Educational offers. They represent the main section with approximately 6000 educational offers for all levels, durations and forms in Europe. In a second stage this will become a common interface of national databases.

For instance, should a client wish for information on educational opportunities in Bucharest in order to obtain a BA in constructions, the search will follow the suggestion below (*Educational offers > University studies > Romanian > Romania > Bucharest > Architecture and constructions > Constructions and civil engineering*).

Educational systems. A general and comparable description of the EU countries' educational systems.

Exchanges and grants. Information on mobility programmes in various countries and those financed by the European Commission.

Contact data. The addresses of national or regional information centres that can offer further details, unavailable on the portal.

Go to a country. Useful information on the necessary documents for moving into another country, on the local specificity of various regions, accommodation, etc.

EUROGUIDANCE is made up of *National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance*, currently includes 62 national / regional centres in 32 European countries and aims to provide a solid communication and information structure. The network offers information on education and employment opportunities, as well as referrals to specialized centres for various other requests.

The international site of EUROGUIDANCE (<http://www.euroguidance.net>) offers general information on the network, services, contact data of the centres or related networks, specific activities, and local information with links to the web sites of each country.

The Romanian site (<http://www.euroguidance.ise.ro>) additionally offers a information and resource base that can be useful to clients and counsellors, regarding the Romanian educational and guidance system, legislation pertaining to counselling, projects, instruments and publications, an online guide for foreign students, local contact data, etc.

Exercises

Improving the web page. Examine the web page of your counselling centre from the point of view of colour, visual organizers, etc. Try out a stronger contrast for main ideas and more in-depth organization of contents.

Opinion confrontation. Find with your colleagues e-mail requests from clients (critical incidents) that do not jeopardize confidentiality and, without reading the answer already provided, try to propose an answer. Study then your colleagues' answer together, examine the differences and try to reach an agreement regarding the order, importance of the aspects in the answer, or the best way to solve the client's request.

Writing style. In order to practice warm and friendly writing, tape a few answer messages sent to clients on diverse topics, then examine if they might be rephrased in a more natural manner. Take into account these observations when composing future messages.

Vocational choice. Starting from Vroom's expectations model described below, create a Microsoft-Excel document for *Vocational choice* and use it with your clients.

Vroom's *Expectations model*, created in 1964, starts from the idea that individuals make decisions so as to obtain the desired results and avoid undesirable ones. The purpose is maximizing the benefits of a decision by identifying the possible and important results evaluated according to desirability. The results are then evaluated function of how probable its alternatives are. Multiplying desirability by the hope for an alternative a score is yielded, which indicates the force or rationality of choosing the alternative, the best choice having the highest score.

Vroom's decision-making model developed on the basis of client expectations presupposes the following steps:

- identifying the possible options;
- defining all important results;
- establishing the degree of importance to the client of each result type (on a scale of 5 where +2 is very important, and -2 totally unimportant);
- calculating the instrumentality (probability of the occupation to meet personal expectations) for each result;
- calculating the degree of desirability by summing up instrumentality of results for each possible profession;
- establishing the access probability for each option (in our example 0.8 for human resource inspector and 0.5 for project assistant);
- obtaining the force of an option by multiplying desirability by the hope of fulfilment.

In this example the option for *human resource inspector* represents the best choice (with a score of 21.6 compared to 6 for *project assistant*).

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Result	Result valence	Instrumentality for Human Resources Inspector: I-HRI		Instrumentality for Project Assistant: I-PA	
2		V	I	V x I-HRI	I	V x I-PA
3	Degree of interest	+2	4	+8	2	+4
4	Degree of distress	-1	3	-3	4	-4
5	Degree of freedom	+1	4	+4	1	+1
6	Promotion perspectives	+1	2	+2	3	+3
7	Job security	+1	4	+4	0	0
8	Travels	0	2	0	3	0
9	Salary	+2	4	+8	3	+6
10	Nice office	+1	4	+4	2	+2
11	Total desirability		+27 (algebraic sum)		+12 (algebraic sum)	
12	Expectations (possibility of fulfilment)		0,8		0,5	
13	Total score		21,6		6	

NOTE:

- In column $V \times I$ (HRI) it will be necessary to use “=PRODUCT(B3:C3)” to find out the instrumentality of the degree of interest for human resource inspector, that is “=PRODUCT(B4:C4)” for degree of distress, etc. (for automatically inserting the formula in an entire column you click on the cell with the correct formula (D3 in our case), position the cursor in the lower right corner of the cell and when the cursor becomes a cross you click and pull the formula downwards to the last cell (D10 in our case).
- In column $V \times I$ (PA) it will be necessary to use “=PRODUCT(B3;E3)” to find out the instrumentality of the degree of interest for project assistant, that is “=PRODUCT(B4;E4)” for degree of distress, etc.
- In order to find out the total desirability in D11 we introduce the sum formula “=SUM(D3:D10)”, for which in cell F11 we click on D11, move the cursor to the lower right corner until it becomes a cross and then we pull the formula to cell F11.

- In order to multiply the total desirability with the expectations in cell C13 we introduce the formula “=PRODUCT(C11;C12)” automatically (according to instructions under the first bullet) by pulling it into cell E13.
- Expectations or possibility of fulfilment is obtained by dividing the hope estimate percentage to 100 (e.g. 80% for human resource inspector and 50% for project assistant).

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- attracting hesitant client to counselling services;
- permanently accessible from any internet connected place and with the necessary equipment;
- accessible to the physically challenged;
- easy and cheap access to and print of information;
- democratic nature, since anyone with basic computer knowledge has access;
- access to more information than traditionally, allowing more exploration possibilities and a higher degree of comparison.

Disadvantages:

- uncertainty of the quality of web sites that were not recommended (some web sites are completely anonymous or offer little data on the authors);
- multitude of web sites: due to the possibility of web site creation with limited resources their number has grown massively and several web sites overlap;
- considerable costs of complex web design.

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Brainstorming in Counselling

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History

The birth of brainstorming is considered to be 1941 when the American psychologist Osborn, advertising director in a company, realized that conventional work meetings inhibited creative idea production. This is why he attempted to develop a set of rules that should stimulate creativity. The rules he proposed offered people the intellectual and action freedom for idea production. “*To think up*” was the original term for the process, which was later known as “brainstorming”. In the initiator’s conception, this could be defined as a “*technique through which a group attempts to find a solution to a specific problem by collecting all spontaneous ideas of its members.*”

The rules for brainstorming can be synthesized thus:

- ideas will not be criticised;
- the quantity and not the quality of ideas is important;
- other people’s ideas can be developed;
- unusual and exaggerated ideas are welcome.

Osborn noticed that if these rules were obeyed, more new ideas could be generated, and consequently a larger quantity of original ideas led to finding more useful ideas. Quantity yielded quality. Using these new rules, natural inhibitions that had made people consider many ideas “mistaken” or “ridiculous” were dropped. Osborn also noticed that “childish” or “stupid” ideas could lead to finding truly valuable ones, because they changed people’s thinking perspective and view of things.

Developing the technique revolutionized and changed much of problem solving. Details on Osborn's original approach can be found in his book, *Applied imagination* (1971).

Brainstorming has spread all over the world and migrated from economy to other fields such as education, boosting innovation. The technique has grown very popular, but not all users know how to apply it correctly.

What are the fields where brainstorming is widely used today?

- Advertising
- Marketing
- Research
- Services
- Engineering
- Government policies
- Organizational management
- Investments
- Insurance
- Education

According to Zlate (1982), from the perspective of social psychology, methods of stimulating group creativity are:

- Brainstorming
- Brainwriting or 6/3/5
- Synectics
- Personal notes, sleep-writing, and group notes

In his study on interactive group methods and techniques used in learning, Oprea (2003) groups those leading to problem solving through stimulating creativity thus:

- Brainstorming
- Starbursting
- Thinking hats
- Merry-go-round
- Multi-voting
- Round table

- Group interview
- Case study
- Critical incident
- Phillips 6/6
- Brainwriting (6/3/5)
- Creative controversy
- Fishbowl
- Focus group
- Four corners
- Frisco method
- Synectics
- Buzz-groups
- Delphi method

Theoretical background

From the perspective of educational sciences, Cerghit (1997) includes brainstorming in the category of oral communication methods, in the subgroup of discussions and debates, and Pânișoară (2001) considers brainstorming a modern educational interaction method.

Career counselling has taken over the method and the characteristics of the process, brainstorming being mainly used:

- as ice-breaker in group sessions;
- for clarification of specific concepts (e.g.: career, success, personal marketing, life style, etc.);
- to stimulate the creativity of participants in problem solving;
- as a way of enlarging perspectives regarding the best alternatives for career planning and entering social and professional life.

The word brainstorming can be paraphrased in lay language by: idea assault, cascade, effervescence, assault of intelligence.

Brainstorming is a process of *lateral thinking*. The concept was created and popularised by Edward de Bono, who believed that lateral thinking presupposes “confidence in problem-solving through unorthodox and apparently illogical methods”, “a set of techniques used to change concepts and perspectives and generate others”, “exploiting several possibilities and alternatives instead of using only one approach”.

The techniques of lateral thinking are based on the capacity of thinking to function outside the pre-established, routine-like pattern, specific to *logical / programmed thinking operations*. Using this technique, new and original solutions can be found to situations and problems we face, but it is important to stress that both ways of thinking have advantages and disadvantages. Programmed thinking is based on logic, discipline, algorithm, and it is extremely efficient to improve products and services. Lateral thinking may generate new ideas and concepts, bring improvement to existing systems, but occasionally the solutions found may be sterile or inefficient.

Many thinkers have used techniques of lateral thinking to obtain new and original solutions. Albert Einstein, for example, used the “challenge” technique to generate fundamental ideas in formulating the Theory of Relativity.

In Edward de Bono’s conception, a creative individual is one who can step back before acting in order to wonder whether there might not be a better solution. This procedure was named “creative pause”. Bono suggests a 30-40 second pause before acting that will eventually become part of one’s usual reaction. Discipline and effort are however necessary in personal education in order to use the technique.

Brainstorming – definitions and characteristics:

- solving a problem through spontaneous discussion to find new ideas and solutions (*Oxford Talking Dictionary*);
- “artificial separation of creative thinking from critical thinking, in the initial problem solving phase”, “liberating from inhibition those whose task is to find new solutions, from criticism of their own ideas or those of others, from the fear of making mistakes and placing themselves in an unfavourable light before the group” (Roşca, 1972);
- a process that yields a maximum number of ideas regarding a topic or field of interest;
- a technique that develops the ability to generate new ideas by abandoning inhibitions and social rules;
- part of the problem-solving process that requires generating a large number of new ideas without initial reference to their usefulness, and in the absence of analysis or critical evaluation;
- free association of ideas or concepts in order to create new ones.

Method presentation

According to Zlate (1982), there are numerous factors preventing creative manifestations:

- *educational*: especially in traditional education, pupils are considered passive, receptive, and the dominant, active, teaching / information passing role falls upon the teacher. Pupils are not taught to play an active part in learning, formulate questions, and find new solutions. Reproductive memory is encouraged rather than creative thinking;
- *psycho-individual*: intelligence, low motivation, avoiding commitment, isolation tendencies and individualism, prejudice, etc.;
- *psycho-social*: pertaining to the relationship between the individual and the other members of the group (fear of ridicule, tendency of submission to the leader, indiscriminating approval of ideas issued by an authority, etc.);
- *organizational*: rigid organizational rules and norms meant to make work more efficient, etc.

Brainstorming is also called *deferred judgement* because it “dissociates idea production time (phase 1- idea production) from evaluation time (phase 2 – critical consideration of ideas)” (Cerghit, 1997). Thus, brainstorming follows two main stages:

Stage 1:

- *Constituting the group and designating the person who keeps track of the ideas*. The person chosen to write down ideas may be the moderator or a group member (positioned so as to allow every participants to see what is written down, e.g. on a flipchart).
- *Introducing the topic*. It can be a general topic, a concept, a question needing an answer, or an element of general activity.
- *Setting rules*. There are a few *rules* that must be taken into account in this stage of brainstorming (the rules are created and detailed on www.brainstorming.co.uk – 1999-2003 – *Internet and computer resources for creativity and brainstorming*).
- *Setting work time*.
- *Drawing up final suggestion list*.

Rule 1: *Postpone judgement*

Analysing and assessing the ideas produced will only be done after the complete closure of the idea generation session. No statements of the type will be permitted: "This idea is no good, has negative effects, it is downright bizarre". All ideas are potentially good and will be written down as such in the first phase. Discussing the ideas should be avoided since this involves critical or positive remarks on the applicability, realism, usefulness, etc., which is only permitted later on.

All ideas must initially be seen as potential solutions / basis / starting point for finding new solutions. Even apparently childish, ridiculous, or unrealistic ideas may generate valuable ideas. For this very reason it is exceedingly important not to judge / evaluate ideas in the first phase, laying stress on quantity, generating as many ideas as possible. All ideas must be written down. There are no good or bad ideas initially.

This rule is important to diminish the influence of inhibiting factors (shyness, fear of mistake). The effect of a brainstorming session is all the more powerful as more ideas are generated initially.

Rule 2: *Exaggerated and unusual ideas are encouraged*

It is much easier to turn a far-fetched idea into a positive and realistic one than find an optimal or valid idea at first shot. This is why the less usual an idea, the better. It is important to issue even bizarre ideas that will apparently not work, in order to see later what viable results they will lead to. No idea is ridiculous or too odd. Even far-fetched, non-conformistic, unconventional ideas must be written down, original or not, illogical, unrealistic, that no one has ever encountered, and that go beyond the patterns of thinking.

Rule 3: *Quantity beats quality in the first phase*

It is very important to find as many ideas as possible at first, leaving their assessment for later. The discussion must be oriented towards producing ideas in the time set. The more ideas there will be at the end of this period, the bigger the effects of the exercise. If the number of ideas written down at the end of the brainstorming session is very large, there is a bigger chance of finding a truly good idea among them. It is important that the idea be presented briefly, without any details, only in synthesis. Brief clarification can be requested. In this phase it is important to think fast and reflect analytically later.

Rule 4: *Build on the ideas of others*

Continuing the ideas expressed by other members of the group and developing other ideas on their basis is encouraged. It is proposed to use the ideas of others as inspiration to produce new ideas, as well as combine old ideas to explore new possibilities. It is just as valuable to be able to adapt or improve the ideas of others as to generate original ideas that themselves open new perspectives.

Rule 5: Each member is important and each idea valuable

Each person has a valid starting point and a unique perspective on possible situations and solutions. It is essential to know everyone's ideas. In a brainstorming session ideas can be found to astound the others and not necessarily to find the final solution. What is important is that everyone should take part, even if some will prefer to note down their ideas on a separate piece of paper. It is stressed that any idea belongs to the group and not to the person issuing it. It is the group's responsibility and an indicator of its ability to participate in brainstorming if all participants feel free and contribute their ideas willingly.

This stage can last between 5 minutes and 2 hours, according to the experience of the participants and the nature of the problem to be solved. A longer session must be divided into sequences of 5-15 minutes with short breaks of activation, relaxation, and encouragement. Pauses must not be imposed rigidly, but made when the group requires them. The freedom to begin or end a sequence is highly important because it dissipates pressure to obtain performance, which the group might feel.

Caution:

- there might be highly creative participants that will monopolize idea production;
- there might appear tendencies of closure from participants who are less involved or who adapt with difficulty to unstructured tasks.

Stage 2:

It presupposes analysis and discussion of the ideas issued and written down. This stage can take place immediately after the preceding one or after a time interval. It is obligatory to keep initially issued ideas (however they were recorded: on paper, audio, video) unchanged. In the "incubation" period, between idea production and analysis, participants are asked not to think about the topic under discussion.

Target population

Practical experience has proved the efficiency of the method in groups of 20 to 30 participants. Other specialists (according to the topic and the skills of the moderator) hold that the optimal size of a brainstorming group is 4-30 participants. Heterogeneous groups

in terms of age, professional qualifications, education, etc. are preferred in order to increase idea diversity and group creativity.

In career counselling it is recommended to form a group of 10-20 participants. Mixed groups (girls-boys, young-adults) yield good results when the moderator makes sure the rules are obeyed, otherwise there is a danger of inhibition or blockage caused by gender or age difference.

Groups larger than 30 people are to be avoided. A large number of participants mean a great diversity of ideas, but it can lead to nervousness and frustration because there is not sufficient time for individual expression.

Examples, case studies, exercises

A “traditional” brainstorming session

1. Preparing for a successful brainstorming

This stage includes preparation anterior to a session of brainstorming.

- Why you wish to hold a brainstorming session?

It is very important to choose a field / problem for which you wish to find new solutions and formulate an *aim* (What do you want to obtain?). The aim statement need not contain the solution to the problem, because new ideas may be prevented from appearing.

Once the aim has been set, you will decide whether it is necessary to hold a brainstorming session or no. Sometimes it is more efficient that the time destined for brainstorming be used to verify / implement an already existing solution.

Do not plan a brainstorming session if there already are several solutions and you merely wish to decide which is best (this is done through analysis). What has already been said should not be ignored, as it would be a waste of time.

- Decide how you wish to organize your brainstorming session

If the aim has been set and you have decided that brainstorming will be of use, it is time to think of the *duration* and *recording* (flipchart, blackboard, audio, video).

It is important to adapt the management of the session to the topic broached and the participants.

Choosing a *facilitator* / *moderator* is another point you must consider before the session begins. The moderator will follow the brainstorming timetable, will make sure the rules are followed and note down all ideas. The facilitator will lead the session (Stage 1 and 2),

making sure all participants are comfortable and active. The facilitator is responsible for interruptions and breaks.

Most often the facilitator will be you yourself. It is important not to place yourself in this position automatically and evaluate yourself beforehand. It may be more appropriate to choose one of the group members or invite someone else to fulfil the part.

- Preparing the room and materials

Place seats in a half circle so that all participants feel equal. The aim will be posted, for everyone to see. Make sure recording materials are present and functional. In addition, each participant will have a set of coloured sheets to write on, so as not to miss any ideas.

Another variant presupposes the existence of a flipchart for every two members, placed in their vicinity. Each will note down their own ideas after first saying them out loud. The facilitator will only stimulate the creative process (and no longer note down ideas).

2. The unfolding of a successful session

Post, if possible, the rules of the session. As participants arrive, try to make them feel relaxed and comfortable by engaging them in a pleasant conversation. Open the session by wishing them welcome and present the aim: gathering as many ideas on a subject, field or topic.

Answer questions and clarify misunderstandings, but do not suggest solutions and try not to raise barriers in the first stage. Make it clear that anything is possible, anything is permitted in the first stage.

- Present the rules of brainstorming. Stress the importance of their being followed. In addition, explain that ideas may be possible solutions as well as stimuli to develop other ideas. Encourage bizarre, unconventional, apparently impossible proposals. If necessary, you may initiate an ice-breaking exercise before the brainstorming, in order to help participants relax and escape their inhibitions. After the warm-up, present again the aim and the topic of brainstorming.
- Note down all ideas. Ask participants to write down individual ideas on the coloured sheets. They will be posted as soon as a page is full.
- Request bizarre, spontaneous ideas, apparently illogical. Remind participants to build from the ideas of others, changing them, exaggerating them, combining them. What is the most unusual way to solve the problem under discussion? Occasionally remind them that you also expect ordinary, everyday ideas. Encourage the expression of all ideas, not just the original ones. Congratulate the participants on their ideas, especially when unusual. Keep on asking them for their ideas. Do not allow criticisms or remarks of the type "I am shocked by this idea". Look participants in the eyes and smile encouragingly. Try to make the process more dynamic, so as not to leave

time for criticism or assessment. Do not address people using their names. Use the pronoun “we” to create group cohesion. Remind them that it is the effort and responsibility of the group to have a creative atmosphere.

- There will inevitably be pauses. Go back to the ideas written down, pick an (interesting) one and ask the group to modify / remodel it.

After a while, the group will run out of ideas and this is why a break will be necessary or the closing of the session, depending on how much time has elapsed. If only a break is needed, as people to move about, talk to each other, and relax. Allow participants to talk about anything they like. After the break, suggest their finding other seats than before. Remind them of the rules and begin a new sequence, using other recording variants, as the case may be.

3. Closing the session

When you wish to end the session, catch the participants’ eye and announce that the session has ended. Thank everyone for their participation and for the “long” list of ideas given. Ask them to write down any further ideas they should get during the day and present them in a future session.

4. Assessment of ideas

Technically, the brainstorming (idea generation) is over. Practically, however, the ideas are worthless if not analysed in the view of use. The same group or a different group can do the analysis.

- It is recommended to write all the ideas in one list

There are several analysis procedures, but the most often used is taking each idea in turn. Should an idea lead to a viable solution, it will be circled. If after the discussions the idea does not yield valid results (cost – time – resource – implementation possibilities), it will not be circled. It is important that an idea should not be crossed out so as not to give a feeling of failure to the group or to the participant with whom it originated.

Another way of analysing ideas is sorting them by three categories:

- excellent ideas (valid answer and solution, quick implementation);
- interesting ideas (an answer and solution requiring further analysis);
- useless ideas (no answers that will help clarify the purpose and cannot be implemented).

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- develops group creativity;
- reduces inhibitions in participants;
- makes members responsible;
- creates a positive atmosphere in the organization / institution / group and harmonious relationships between the participants;
- develops a friendly framework to solve problems and better relationships between superiors and employers, teachers and pupils, parents and children;
- reduces conflicts in personal and professional relationships between group members.

Disadvantages:

- reduces the recognition of personal merit;
- cannot be applied individually;
- the success of the technique depends on time, resources, and a creative group;
- some people do not get involved and do not contribute anything, which makes them feel uncomfortable in the group;
- there is the risk that the participants cannot escape inhibition, leading to pauses, discomfort, and poor results;
- there is the risk that strong personalities wish to stand out and take over the discussion.

Possible *causes* leading to a failed brainstorming session:

- some participants do not consider themselves creative;
- there is authority in leading the session, which generates fear and inhibitions to participants;
- the objectives of the session are not set;
- participants are not used to creative thinking or techniques;
- the group is not heterogeneous enough;
- various personality types need various brainstorming types;

- there has not been enough encouragement or guidance;
- no warm-up;
- unfriendly location;
- the ideas of other participants are not used to stimulate the creative process.

On occasion, it is expected that brainstorming yields spectacular results, but the basic rules of procedure are unknown. It is as if trying to play chess without knowing how to move the players. Moreover, it may be decided that brainstorming does not work and it may never be used again! A badly conducted brainstorming may lead to mistrust in the technique or one's own capacities to run a session. This is why it is important that any career counsellor, before moderating a brainstorming session, be experienced as a participant in such a group. If the rules are followed, the brainstorming session will yield results, whatever the personality and personal style of the members, because the technique is flexible enough to allow the involvement of each and every participant.

“Advanced” brainstorming can prevent some of the disadvantages of the “traditional” brainstorming. This is an improved technique leading to a higher success rate and involves more creative techniques, as well as information and communication technology as stimuli to increase the diversity and number of ideas.

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www.brainstorming.co.uk

Telephone Counselling

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History

Telephone and telephony go back to 1876, to the patent obtained by Alexander Graham Bell for the electronic transmission of sound to a distance. He made the telephone a well-known and reliable instrument and medium. The novelty nowadays intervenes with options such as: teleconference, dial-up Internet, caller ID, market competition regarding the calling rates, etc.

Telephone counselling has a tradition going back to emergency medical calls. Such professional communication was used in cases when:

- no direct emergency medical assistance can be offered;
- the doctor must change the course of treatment for patients at a distance;
- experts outside the region or country must be consulted on urgent matters;
- triage.

Since competition and the attempt to break the state monopoly on infrastructure and services causes a continuing drop in the costs of telephone calling facilities in more and more countries all over the world, medical telephone counselling proves its efficiency today as ever.

Another element marking the development of this sector is the emergency psychiatric help, launched in 1960 with the suicide hotlines. They were then and still are today highly efficient. Shortly after, the hotlines were made available for rape victims. If in emergency situations specific social intervention instruments were created, career counselling has also extended its sphere towards alternative means and practices for the benefit of clients proactively making their way in life, who are in psychological difficulty, emotional impasse, in need of information regarding the world of education, training and labour, etc.

When AIDS spread in the United States in the beginning of the 1980s, AIDS Hotline was founded in California, operated by volunteer agents, to inform and guide the victims of the disease. Ever since, the Public Health Department in San Francisco signed a contract with the new organization, so that it would also offer limited educational services. This was the birth of TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf) with separate telephone lines for Hispanic and Haitian clients. The number of calls made in 2005-2006 was no less than 70,000.

In the UK there is Learndirect (www.learndirect.co.uk/) – a service using a call centre and web technologies in communication regarding training, career and business for young people over 16.

Teleconference is rather widespread in the UK in the rehabilitation programmes for young people who have committed crimes and are serving a sentence in prison. Before being released, they meet with a personal counsellor who will coach them back in civil life (CNROP, 2005). Total control on behalf of the authorities is replaced by the presence of the counsellor, already in the detention centre, who helps the young people re-enter social and vocational life.

The Hessen Land in Germany has recently opened in Giessen the first regional telephone centre for clients *KuZ – Kundenzentrum* (in *Bundesagentur für Arbeit – The Federal Employment Agency* – www.arbeitsagentur.de/). *KuZ* tackles over 80% of the requests that would have been otherwise addressed one-on-one with counsellors in the agency (information on facilities for the unemployed, appointments for individual counselling sessions, etc.); counsellors are thus freed of administrative and/or routine tasks and can deal with individual cases coming to the centre.

Theoretical background

Part of the family made of media and technologies for distance communication, telephone counselling stands out by a series of characteristics describing it as an accessible, relatively inexpensive method requiring a certain protocol / language on the part of users, and that can be applied at variable time moments: previously, during or consecutive to direct meetings between the counsellor and client.

Telephone has found its maximum practical efficiency in other fields than psychological or vocational counselling. Entire sectors in television and radio industry, sales and advertisement have been taken over by operators trained to manage the relationship with beneficiaries over the telephone. This is why we watch or listen to interactive shows (information, talk shows, entertainment) where just because the caller is paying for the call makes him/her entitled to expressing an opinion and to expecting satisfaction. In fact, by merely dialling, the caller admits to the importance, the means and rules of the interaction proposed.

The living space of modern people is populated by many preoccupations, among which the essential and permanent ones (career, private life, social circle) require physical presence; for the past decades, progress has been made – hard to imagine occasionally – in promoting a kind of involvement from a distance, giving the possibility of covering several areas of activity without actually attending in person the human gatherings. Examples of this kind are e-commerce, tele-shopping, self-employment, online matchmaking. Guidance counsellors renew their communication channels with clients without forgetting the relevance of direct relationships. In case the client's home is far located from public institutions that could help solve his/her needs, or maybe going there in person even for one single time would pose insurmountable difficulties, or there is a personal reluctance to engage on troublesome matters with a perfect stranger, telephone counselling is the answer. We are not implying telephone counselling to be superior to traditional methods; it is merely an **alternative** with proven pragmatic effects in a number of situations.

Cognitive research by Broadbent (1958) shows that in processing information the cortex acts as a unilateral communication system when input level or intensity to a certain receptor surpasses the impulses transmitted to other receptors. What happens is that the brain temporarily retains information on all the stimuli, which rapidly erode at the impact with the consciousness level and can be stored for further recovery only by the short-term memory. Lester (1995) proved that the tendency to reduce visual exchanges between the counsellor and the client is not new. In traditional psychoanalysis, the helpers place themselves outside the clients' view, which also means that the persons "on the couch" do not see them. Similarly, the confessional in the Roman Catholic Church requires the physical separation of the priest from the person coming for a confession. The parallel is that the lack of direct physical presence of the two interlocutors better safeguards the person's intimacy and only the problem itself is submitted to common attention.

Method presentation

Telephone counselling yields results in a series of contexts such as:

depression, stress, grieving, anxiety, low self-esteem, sexual dysfunction, alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse, obsessions, post-traumatic disorder, transition difficulties, relational discomfort at workplace, anger management, parental approach to child discipline, life style counselling.

Sometimes an assessment of medication treatment may be needed beforehand (e.g.: anti-depressives), followed by a referral to a specialist. There is even a telephone counselling procedure that is part of weight losing programmes; clients who purchase various slim products (extremely costly) benefit from the "free advice" of a personal trainer. The relatively large number of web sites promoting / "guaranteeing" successful interventions in these situations speak of the public impact of psychologists and therapists

who have changed their way of performing to include telephone counselling (with technological aids like the e-mail, voice-mail, or their own Internet page for appointments).

The first contact over the telephone is conditioned by paying the supplier, either by credit card or *PayPal* (www.paypal.com/), bank transfer or *Moneybookers* (www.moneybookers.com/app/). In order to protect individual privacy and also to ensure tax deduction for telephone counselling, some counsellors recommend to clients not to declare “mental health services” on the annual income statement, but the name and contact information of the practitioner. The advertisement sells a few free counselling minutes in a telephone service package, the cost of which varies between 40-100 USD an hour.

A client seeking telephone counselling may be a person who has already been met with a counsellor and feels safe to use the latter’s expertise again. If the first contact was made in a climate of trust and openness, then the client will feel free to come back and prefer a certain counsellor or approach.

In principle, the counsellors will try to structure any telephone session into the following stages⁶:

- Greeting – after about 3 rings (giving the client time to get used to the idea of making a valid telephone call and at the same time giving the counsellor the certainty that the client really intends to call), the counsellor will pick up and introduce himself/herself in connection to the counselling organization. The counsellor’s voice should be natural, calm and firm, with good and distinctive pronunciation adapted to the caller’s rhythm of speech and problem, with his/her contribution should not exceeding the client’s, except perhaps in the case of shy or hesitant clients. The counsellor thus conveys the idea of appropriate place and interlocutor for a caller unaware of what / who is there at the other end.
- Information – identifying the client type and needs, making priorities and defining the problem.
- Discussion – unfolds after a protocol meant to encourage clear and concise expression, tracing the origin and evolution of the issue up to the present moment, assessment of options, formulating arguments pro and con in relation to the options that appear valid, identifying the persons and organizations that could be used as a resource for the procedure intended. Key moments promoted by trainers in marketing for *telephone coaching* can also be adapted to telephone counselling at this stage: starting from the **situation** stated by the client, the ideal and reasonable **aims** are set, the necessary **process** is outlined and then the success is **assessed**.

⁶ As promoted in the ToT seminar for English speaking trainers “Distance counselling by telephone”, 1-5 September 2003, Oberursel by a team of trainers made up of Winfried Vollmer (Germany), Ivan Valkovič (Slovakia) and the author of the present article. The seminar took place in the project Leonardo da Vinci no. D/01/B/F/PP-112 405.

- Temporary agreement – a framework is formulated for further communication, the details of the next contact, the steps for the client to take in the sense agreed during the conversation, and possible future action.
- Ending the conversation – just like in the first stage, it is good to be moderately emotional to convey the client a sense of comfort, reliability, and self-trust.

The contents, duration and methodological requirements mentioned above for each stage are situational and extremely flexible, according to the circumstances of the call being initiated, the client's personality, the practitioner's style, the nature of the problem, the urgency and complexity of the solution, or other factors. The information disclosed by the client should be written down as it is given, right during the call; in difficult case however the counsellor may take notes after the call, based on the recording. No one calls a counsellor to hear a message of the kind they use in customer service: *"To improve the services we provide for you, this conversation may be recorded. Your holding the line represents your agreement with the procedure."* Clients seek non-uniform, individualized treatment, alternatives, new ideas, reversed perspectives, denying a suspicion or double-checking on a supposition. The private and apparently anonymous nature of the telephone exchange is the most distinctive aspect of the method.

Monitoring telephone counselling is absolutely necessary to ensure quality in a demanding and restrictive professional environment. Audio and/or video recording of the practitioner at work make reference materials (with a special status) for team learning, collegial help, expert consulting. Other instruments of asserting the client satisfaction with the service received (e.g.: questions at the beginning or end of a new conversations, questionnaire sent by (e-)mail, feedback from significant others) complete the image of the practitioner's telephone competence. Internal assessment in the counselling organizations offering exclusive telephone service or integrated with face-to-face counselling must take place periodically (weekly is recommended), so as not to let accumulate a volume of work impossible to follow through.

On the average, counselling telephone calls last 9.6 minutes⁷. The most frequently asked questions (22.7%) refer to general information on certain work sectors, and then less and less for help with materializing certain ideas, employment, support for already made decisions, assessment of alternatives, issues on other countries, implementing decisions. The percentage of second calls is 38%. The data above must be read under the reserve that the practitioners who contributed to this statistics are not primarily telephone counsellors.

In interpersonal communication, whether traditional or mediated, there are several conditions to be met (Dinu, 2004). We have adapted them for the use of telephone counsellors:

⁷ According to the data collected by a research made for the "Distance counselling by telephone" project, on a sample of 230 practitioners in eight European countries.

- *Frankness* – the counsellors must act in honesty, not conceal the fact that only partial or no help might be provided, be consistent with the employer's policy and leave no room for misunderstanding.
- *Helpfulness* – the counsellors should express the intention to offer help, with an energy that goes beyond formal politeness and actively moves in client's favour.
- *Empathy* – being one with the client regarding the psychic (thoughts, feelings, will). This allows the counsellors to understand their interlocutor sooner and better, not to judge and find the arguments that are likely to resonate with the each particular client.
- *Positive attitude* – in terms of unconditional offer of professional help, encouragement of self-confidence, positive feedback, assessment of how the client has reacted to what has been said so far.
- *Equality* – the two interlocutors must communicate from compatible positions, as well as contribute equally to the dialogue.

The fact that non-verbal elements are completely shut out in telephone counselling, what is essential is the language and the way the practitioners use it to maximize the counselling effort. Personalizing elements of the counselling discourse in this case are:

- Key-words, accents, silence, interruptions, sighing.
- Paraphrase, summary, helpful phrases.
- Questions – that must be asked according to the client's personality: if timid, confused, aggressive, discouraged, undecided or else the counsellor may ask warming-up questions, clarification, motivating, reflexive, focused, descriptive, alternative, control questions, but not too many at the time or not too insistent so as not to give clients the impression that pressure is being put upon them.

Since web service companies (e.g.: *Yahoo*, *MSN*, *Google*) have recently introduced instant voice messenger, individual and group web counselling sessions can be held. Preliminary conditions: both / all partners have a chat user account, are present at the same time in front of a computer, have headphones and microphone, are able to type and use the programme and be interested in abstract, virtual interaction.

An alternative Internet telephone system is *Skype* (the latest version of the programme can be freely downloaded from: www.skype.com/products/skype/windows/), a Luxembourg-based multi-million euro company recently purchased by *eBay* in 2005. *Skype* users may interact freely, in a PC-to-PC *chat room* system. For a charge you can call and be called from both landlines and wireless phones and receive vocal messages, all due to a computer application that transcends the various network connections. The charges are not the same as with conventional telephone system, they depend on the liberalization of telecommunication in the destination country and the flow of calls into and out of the country. The deposit required to make PC to phone calls is of 10 € and is

payable online. The study conducted in October 2005 shows *Skype* is mainly addressed to young people below 30, of whom most are European citizens (followed by Brazil and China with 8.1% each).

Target population

The range of counselling services has diversified as a consequence of the more sophisticated needs of the target groups. Career and professional development is an increasingly important part of the life of modern people who are to a new society at a fast pace, the fundamentals of which are dissimilar even from that of a decade ago. The changes on the workforce market (ageing, professionalisation), as well as the emergence of new specialties in indirectly productive sectors (stock market, real estate speculations, multilevel marketing) make people require advice, guidance, information, counselling so as to improve the workers' professional role and status.

Traditional education and training cannot cover the plethora of opportunities that *pupils and students* have nowadays when deciding on continuing their education or taking up employment. This is why they can learn over the phone about the opportunities for grants, jobs, benefits and obligations related to their enrolment in a certain educational or professional programme, special requirements for access, throughout the programme or before the graduation. In addition, young people can be helped to better understand their current situation, perspectives and viable options.

Parents may call on behalf of young people undecided regarding what employment course to choose, whether in state-owned or private enterprises or institutions, whether to remain in the country or go abroad, about their compatibility with the position, motivation, satisfaction, income, etc.

Telephone counselling is also destined to *working adults* who desire a career adjustment and are in need of information on how to approach a certain employer, organizational culture in a given sector; the same, *people in need of a job* and who do not have access to other information sources, comparable experiences, and have no time or capacity to explore on their own, or are in psychological / emotional difficulty.

Management and administration staff may turn to counsellors specialized in human resources. The advice expected is a personalized answer to urgent or postponed problems of those who must face new or unusual situations, on the condition they prefer to consult a third party rather than their direct supervisor or boss.

Examples, case studies⁸, exercises

The caller is a young man who has found out that his position is about to be affected by a cutback. The young man is worried because he does not seem to be able to keep a job for long.

The counsellor asks him about his marital status and his situation at home; she finds out that he is “the head of a family”, has two small children, rents his apartment and has loaned money for purchasing durables, such as home appliances.

The objective situation is that the company must give up the IT assistant position the client had earned a year before. The certificate obtained by taking specialty training and the professional certificate from the local technical high school had ensured this position, but there are no guarantees for him to be kept in the field.

The counsellor wants to know what skills the young man has and what he likes to do outside his profession. The client mentions electronic repairs, and music industry as his hobbies, from which he has gotten satisfaction since adolescence.

Emotionally, the young man blames himself for the insecurity of his family, he is afraid of his wife silent contempt for his failing to provide for them. He had hoped for more from his profession, he knows how fragile the labour market is in their town, but had considered that punctuality at work would recommend him for long-term employment or even promotion.

On the counsellor asking him about his initiatives and contacts made at work, the young man realizes he has nothing, instead he has always obeyed to the existing protocols. The young man is aware of some talent in fields where innovation, unusual ideas, improvement suggestions are appreciated, features that bring astounding progress in electronics and music. It is then proposed that the young man turn from the IT sector to service for electronics and/or household appliances, or local disk jockey. Asked what benefits he expects from a next job, the young man says he expects similar social prestige and some financial stability. That ruled out the DJ idea...

The counsellor recommends that in the next two weeks (along with his notice) he let people know (friends, former school mates) he is comfortable with that he is actively looking for a job. At the same time, he should carefully study the labour market (newspapers or websites he knows as an IT professional) and send his CV to envisaged employers. During this period, by telephone or in face-to-face appointment the client and the counsellor will be able to discuss the structuring of a letter of intent and how the young man should conduct himself in an interview, once he retains advantageous offers.

⁸ From the seminar “Professional counselling”, 16-19 March 2004, Bușteni, for vocational counsellors and mediators in the pilot network ADO SAH ROM.

Method evaluation

Advantages:

Telephone counselling offers the following advantages compared to face-to-face counselling:

- most homes or institutions have a telephone set ensuring access and call privacy;
- time saved by not going to the counsellor's office, no need to arrange child care, to postpone personal obligations;
- avoiding possible embarrassment in meeting people who are not aware of the essence and benefits of counselling (e.g.: in the waiting room);
- opportunity of working with a specialist who is not otherwise available;
- costs for the client and counsellor significantly below the face-to-face counselling (between 25 and 150% lower), more so with toll-free numbers;
- additional chance for physically disabled clients to benefit from counselling;
- for emotionally ambivalent personalities, with interaction difficulties, in need of keeping a safe distance, who feel justified or apparent guilt (Grumet, 1979). For them, the telephone is "a strategic combination of privacy and security";
- anonymity confers a secure framework for self-revelation and thought as well as emotional expression;
- for some clients there is an increased possibility to grow into exercising control over the counselling process, compared to the presence in an office and in the proximity of the counsellor;
- taking part in TSG – *telephone support groups* – and including clients in self-support networks;
- in some follow-up studies evaluating telephone counselling, most clients appreciated being listened to and getting feedback, understanding and compassion, support and unconditional guidance (Lester, 1995);
- quick appointment and delivery;
- flexibility of circumstances (in the comfort of one's home, during lunch breaks, during car trip);
- clients receptive to the counsellor's methodology learn the approach and can take the steps to apply it adequately in solving other unpleasant life situations;
- ending the conversation in an action plan.

Disadvantages:

- inapplicable on clients poorly equipped or with no motivation for face-to-face confrontation or exchange;
- on the one hand the counsellor loses the opportunity to impress clients by means of his presence or his office, diplomas, certificates and other references displayed, charisma, etc.; only the quality of the communication and the emotional impression prove the counsellor's competence;
- persistence in the common knowledge of a stigma attached to counselling or therapy, and to the people requesting such help directly or indirectly;
- impossibility to make sure of a client who seems to be in urgent need of hospitalisation or treatment;
- difficulties in staying both involved in the case and critical of the service quality the counsellor provides during telephone counselling;
- although the communication codes are known, information traffic cannot be controlled, nor can the final destination of the data exchanged through systems like *Skype*. Some European companies have already forbidden them from being downloaded or used, due to the virus threat;
- the risk that the counsellor's discourse might become conversational and lose its healing and formative role;
- the increased incidence of obscene or interrupted calls since the client does not feel obligated to hold on to a "counselling contract".

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Multicultural Counselling

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History

The main stages of multicultural counselling are, according to Launikari and Puukari:

1. *The birth of multicultural counselling (in the 1950s)*. The awareness of intercultural problems emerges in the 1950s when American counsellors begin to consider the problems of African-Americans and other minorities affected by segregation, racism and prejudice, principally aiming to “assimilate minorities into the American society” (Copeland, 1983; Jackson, 1995, apud Launikari et al., 2005). The first articles appear in the specialized literature on the way counselling can take into account the cultural background of minority groups.
2. *Early multicultural counselling (in the 1960s)*. In this period “the aims of counselling begin to change from assimilating minorities to *recognition and appreciation of cultural differences*” (Copeland, 1983, apud Launikari et al., 2005). The stress falls on the counsellor’s availability to answer the client, and on multicultural research to identify specific needs “of the *culturally different / disadvantaged*” (Jackson, 1995, apud Launikari et al., 2005).
3. *Crystallisation of multicultural aspects in counselling (1970s – 1980s)*. The interest in multicultural counselling increases significantly in many countries over the world. The limitations of traditional psychological instruments that was culturally biased and not valid for other cultures than the dominant one are highlighted. The accent shifts now on the entire counselling process, by including multicultural modules in the initial counsellor training (Hills; Strozier, 1992, apud Launikari et al., 2005).

4. *Multicultural counselling as the fourth major theoretical direction in career counselling (1990 – to present)* as a corollary of traditional approaches in counselling: psychodynamic, cognitive-behaviouristic and existentialist-humanist (Zakár, et al. 2004). Multiculturalism is well grounded theoretically; there is an acute need for adopting documents of professional ethics to strengthen the awareness of multicultural aspects. In 1991, Pedersen publishes an issue of the *Counselling and Development Journal* dedicated to *multiculturalism as the fourth force in counselling*, which broaches various perspectives of the self: existential, behavioural, cognitive, social (Sue, 1996, apud Launikari et al., 2005).

Theoretical background

Socio-demographic context

Population mobility is a defining feature of the contemporary society. This phenomenon increases the incidence of cohabitation of various cultures, obliging them to follow norms that are considered foreign, which is a major stress and inadaptation factor.

Cultural differences manifest themselves by “different systems of values and life styles”, but their identification does not allow the formulation of generalities for certain cultural groups, since differences within a group are often considerable (Zakár et al, 2004, apud Sue & Sue 1982).

In intercultural contact, people “seek to build or rebuild in the eyes of the ‘other’ a new identity (in relative opposition to the stereotypes the others are perceived to have regarding one’s self), wish to be reassured and look for positive feedback to confirm their ‘new identity’ ... (these stereotypes are ‘advantageous’ for reasons of intellectual and informational ‘laziness’ (Jigău et al, 2004).

Cultural fundamentals requiring specific interventions

Helping practices are culturally conditioned. Since not all cultures have formal counselling and the euro-centric vision of the world is different from other life visions, the theory and practice of formal counselling are not easy to apply to people from other cultural contexts. Since it emerged in Western culture, psychology serves people in this culture best. Peavy and Li (2003, apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005), warn “if psychology and the activities based on it (such as counselling) do not change their approach to counselling people from other cultures, current theories and practices will become outdated and irrelevant for ever larger groups of people”. Counselling as social support is not common in most cultures.

There are *cultural dimensions* that must be taken into account when the guidance process takes place in intercultural contexts (Launikari and Puukari, 2005).

Left-right: various cultures associate different meanings to the word: right is often correct, just, while left is sly, incorrect, dishonest. In order to avoid the already existing marginalization due to differences from the majority culture, these meanings must be remembered.

Visual or audio-tactile: these senses are closely related to human communication means, with significant differences between cultures regarding the preferential means of message reception / delivery. Some people are oriented towards visual messages, while others are more open to audio-tactile stimulation. In western cultures learning is mainly done through reading written texts, which particularly develops visual memory, while in other cultures and in poorly literate traditional societies “the majority learned from stories, anecdotes, song, allegories and fables narrated by story-tellers, parents, priests, etc. who thus convey knowledge, values and beliefs... people also exercising their memory”. (Garcea, 2005, apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005). Traditional societies are identified by McLuhan (1962, *ibid*) as being dominated by listening and defined by intuition and the prominence of the group, and modern technological societies are associated to sight, rationalism and individualism.

As regards *time perception*, in the East it is mainly oriented towards the past (historic characters, traditional norms), in Southern Europe and Latin America it is oriented towards the present, and in the West towards the future (objectives achievement).

The five specific cultural values identified by Hofstede (1988, *ibid*) are:

- *power distance* expresses the difference in status and attitude between various hierarchic levels, which results in degrees of respect towards parents, teachers, superiors, elderly, etc. Among the cultures with a long power distance are the Asian, where the emperor, leader or manager are viewed with particular respect, while in Western societies the status of a person within an institution may change throughout his or her career;
- *avoiding uncertainty* represents the extent to which people try to avoid uncertain or unpredictable situations. “People with very organized lives panic easily when something *goes wrong*, while others, apparently less organized, can be more flexible in solving unpredictable situations” (*ibid*). Hofstede identifies three ways by which man tries to avoid uncertainty: *technology* as protection of citizens against disasters and wars; *legal norms* created to control human behaviour; and *religion* targeting metaphysics and spirituality;
- *individualism vs. collectivism* targets the relationships between individuals and community. In individualistic societies people tend to be mainly concerned with themselves and their families, while collectivist societies have stronger social bonds and form stronger and more cohesive groups;
- *masculinity vs. femininity* refers to the role of gender-specificity in society. Male-oriented societies present a clear role separation. A man must be assertive, strong, centred on material success; a woman must be modest, gentle and centred on life quality. In woman-oriented societies there is no clear role separation;

- *confucian dynamism* is met with in countries of the Far East, some regions of Africa and the Middle East; it comes with long-term orientation, persistence, prosperity, and a strong sense of duty. Cultures with short-term orientation give great importance to self-image, reputation, dignity, and prestige.

Six mental models conditioning people's action and behaviour (ibid):

- *the competition model* specific to highly competitive cultures, with short power distance, high individualism and masculinity, and a slight need to avoid uncertainty;
- *the network model* is based on consensus, and presupposes short power distance, individualism and femininity, popular participation in decision-making;
- *the family model* is based on loyalty and hierarchy, long power distance, collectivism and masculinity, loyalty to the reference group;
- *the pyramid model* is based on loyalty, hierarchy, and order, with a long power distance, oriented towards collectivism and avoiding uncertainty;
- *the solar system model* defines cultures with strong hierarchies and impersonal bureaucracy, characterized by power distance and individualism;
- *the "well-oiled machine" model* is met in cultures that set a high value on order, defined by short power distance, high need to avoid uncertainty, and scrupulous obedience of procedures and rules.

Migration and attitudes with respect to it

As regards motivations behind migration, the International Migration Organization identifies two factor categories (Launikari and Puukari, 2005): *attraction of the destination country* (higher income, better living conditions, experience of the immigrants, good employment prospects, and more individual freedom); *rejection of the country of origin* (wars or ethnic conflicts, famine, natural disasters).

Socio-economic factors causing intolerance towards minorities (Launikari and Puukari, 2005):

- experience of unemployment, deterioration in personal situation and social and professional prospects;
- low education (the lower, the higher the intolerance);
- no relatives (becoming related to people from minority groups considerably diminishes racist and xenophobic attitudes);
- political affiliation (right-wing people harbour more radical attitudes towards minorities).

Four attitude types can be identified (Thalhammer, 2001, apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005): *actively tolerant, intolerant, passively tolerant, and ambivalent*.

Attitude	Category			
	actively tolerant	passively tolerant	ambivalent	intolerant
Acceptance / anxiety towards minority group	strong acceptance	poor acceptance	no acceptance	strong anxiety
Minority group enriches society	total agreement	agreement	neutral	total disagreement
Assimilation / integration; give up or keep their own culture	strong on integration	weak on integration	weak on assimilation	strong on assimilation
Anti-racism policies	active support	no support	neutral	total disagreement

Lately in Europe is taking place a *change in the way cultural minorities are viewed by promoting cultural pluralism*: “minorities must be integrated and not discriminated against for ethnic reasons and should ... even be encouraged to keep their original culture” (Pitkanen, 2005, *ibid*). The majority population must be taught to value other cultures for the enrichment potential of their own cultures. Pluralism admits the idea that there are universally applicable moral standards irrespective of national, cultural, social, or religious origins, *people being similar and different at the same time* (Matilal, 1991, apud Launikari et al., 2005).

The principles of multicultural counselling (Kerka, 1992, apud Launikari et al., 2005):

Creating a climate of acceptance – clients must be encouraged to be themselves inside the group, put to use and understand their own culture and culture of others.

Promoting a positive self-image – seeing each client as a unique and valuable individual who can contribute to counselling and social integration; counsellors must raise in their clients a sense of progress and success.

The group is a source of learning for each – individuals from very different cultural environments enrich learning resources for the members; counsellors must teach their clients to share their experience.

Building interpersonal relationships – the development through multicultural counselling of contacts and friendships helps minorities fight stress and establish links with the real life, these relationships made within group counselling sessions will subsequently be renewed and activated outside the counselling setting.

Flexibility of the counselling programme – by adapting to the needs of the client from the minority group and cultivating recognition, understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity and individual uniqueness with a view to ensuring superior motivation.

Ivey adds to these, in 1997, a few methodological principles of multicultural counselling (Zakár et al, 1004):

- integrating elements of general counselling approaches under the form of meta-theories;
- taking into account the individual differences between client and counsellor;
- describing clients' cultural identity by their attitude towards training, profession, society, and the others;
- adapting the methods to real life and the client's system of values;
- developing measures to meet negative models promoted in the family and minority group.

In the context of multicultural counselling it is attempted to endow clients with the following values and norms (Zakár et al, 2004, apud Katz, 1985): responsibility, independence, autonomy, active and proactive attitude, open communication, availability and commitment to improving one's own behaviour, objectivity, neutrality, rationality, time management.

Multicultural competences of counsellors

Aside from the clearly multicultural situations involving work with minorities or immigrants, any counselling situation has a multicultural facet, since as Launikari and Puukari (2005) show, "counsellors must be aware that all clients bring to the counselling and guidance process their entire unique personal history and culture (gender, social class, belief, language, etc)". It is unavoidable to select career-counselling theories carefully in order to identify the culturally biased ones that do not allow the adequate identification of clients from different cultural environments.

On the other hand, as Seeley points out, multicultural counselling requires not so much knowledge on other cultures, as "an understanding of the complex processes of socialization and construction of world vision, attitudes, values, and norms of a person" (2000, apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005).

Sue (1996) distinguishes between three categories of multicultural competences pertaining to counsellors (apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005): awareness of their own perspectives, values and preferences; understanding the world view of clients who are culturally different, the ability to develop adequate strategies and techniques for intervention.

Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication represents the process where those who interact "mutually create, propose, and accept "codes" adequate to the contents, with which they will operate

in dialogue, ... realized through the contribution of all participants to communication, increasing dialogue depth and decreasing at the same time the gap between the transmitted message and its reception, understanding, and the reaction elicited ... (through a process of) 'negotiation' and agreement between the universes of subjectivity belonging to the actors in communication" (Jigău et al, 2004). The process is characterized by ambivalence, "oscillation between opening and refusal of communication, between the feeling of belonging to a 'reference group' and the wish to make contacts with other groups, between positive and negative attitudes, between progress and regress, occasionally generating ethnocentrism, but not xenophobia, as a reflex of social prejudice, images, representations and stereotypes, especially when people take over these 'ready-made' images and do not construct or reconstruct them by themselves" (Jigău et al, 2004).

This takes place "every time we communicate with people from other groups that we perceive being different" (Dodd, 1991, apud Launikari, 2005). The difference may arise from language, clothing, greeting, leisure activities, attitude towards work, punctuality, professionalism, etc. and overcoming these differences presupposes changing the language, the reference system of values, customs, and lifestyle.

Moreover, Dodd shows that multicultural situations require adapting the communication to the interlocutor's specificity. In the case of *mono-cultural communication* the interaction takes place between members of the same culture presenting similarities in behaviour, beliefs, language and values, and it is based on common definitions of the environment, as well as on an agreement about norms and traditions, allowing members to anticipate the behaviour of others and take on a common perception of reality.

The competence of *intercultural communication* represents "the ability to communicate efficiently and adequately in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, 2003, apud Launikari, 2005). This competence is made up of *cognitive* abilities (cultural self-awareness, understanding the cultural specificity, identity development models, understanding the cultural adaptation), *behavioural* (the management of interacting with others, of stress and anxiety, listening, observing, social adaptability, empathy, building relationships, defining and solving problems), and *affective -motivational* (curiosity, openness, patience, tolerance, perseverance, flexibility, initiative to explore other cultures, respect for the values and beliefs of others, sensitivity to group and interpersonal harmony).

Method presentation

Preparatory and supportive actions

In order to avoid negative effects generated by cultural prejudice, Launikari (2005) identifies three aspects that counsellors must be aware of:

- *transfer of past irrelevant experiences* may cause unintentional racism towards clients from other cultural environments; in order to avoid this situation the counsellors must be aware of their personal cultural constructs (biases, stereotypes, and prejudices), by answering two questions before the , counselling session: “*what do I represent for the client?*” and “*what does the client represent for me?*”;
- *authenticity of the counselling relationship* is a condition for success in multicultural counselling, this is why “it must be cultivated and maintained throughout the entire counselling process” (Puukari, 2005), while “empathy, unconditional respect and congruence enhance efficacious counselling.” (Carter, 1985, apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005);
- *work alliance* to commit clients to the solutions identified and their consequences, counsellors must allow sufficient time to create an emotional bond, clarify their motivation by establishing the purposes of each counselling session, solving problems and making plans for the future, with the clients’ cooperation.

Sundberg and Sue add the following requirements for counsellors (1989, apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005):

- understanding the purpose and expectations in relation to the counselling session;
- developing favourable attitudes for intercultural understanding, and communication skills;
- understanding and explaining external conditions to the clients;
- understanding and distinguishing by the counsellor of the universal and specific cultural elements in the counselling process.

Batumubwira recommends that in the first contact with a client, a counsellor clarifies the client’s attitude towards the counselling service that can vary from positive to refractory, and adopt adequate measures. Clients may ask the following questions (Launikari and Puukari, 2005):

1. How much does the counsellor know about me?
2. Does the counsellor really care about my situation?
3. What does the counsellor expect from me?

In the case of *ideal clients*, a counsellor may directly proceed with concrete problem-solving, considering that: nothing is known about the clients, but they are a valuable person who has a lot to share; the counsellor is interested in their problems even if not directly in their person, and willing to express a personal opinion on potential solutions.

In the case of *difficult clients*, a counsellor must first help clients overcome their mistrust of counselling services. The difficult clients’ attitude is defined by the following

presuppositions: the counsellor knows nothing about me, cannot understand my true problems so I cannot expect too much understanding; the counsellor is waiting for me to speak about my problems, and will find a solution.

Counsellors will try to *provide favourable conditions for efficient communication* with their clients. They will therefore explain directly what counselling means, what the expected results are, and clarify the “rules of the game” ... clients must arrive from suspicion to confidence ... and to the expectation of tangible results in their daily life (Batumubwira, apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005).

Members of a minority must be helped in their integration process by initial association with co-nationals, but later they must be encouraged gradually to have intercultural contacts with the members of the majority culture, so as not to deepen discrepancies between the minority community and the majority society.

In order to *gain and maintain trust on the part of refractory clients* it is essential to follow the ethical principles of counselling. Counsellors must treat very carefully any situation that might create difficulties to clients on the part of the state institutions.

The choice of counselling methods in multicultural contexts is made function of the context, the clients' needs, and their personality profile.

After becoming aware of their own culture, an important stage for counsellors is *to understand clients' lives by listening to their ideas and attitudes* on life, wishes and hopes for the future, desirable modes of action in view of fulfilling personal aspirations, etc.

Johansson three stage intervention model (applicable in immigrant counselling): *familiarization, my life, and planning the future* (apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005).

The model involves a succession of exercises that can be adapted to the group specificity. At first the optimal means of expression is identified and used: either speaking, writing, drawing, etc. In certain cases it is recommended to offer clients the possibility of producing the materials in their native language, which might require the presence of a translator.

1. Familiarization

The purpose of these exercises is to give participants the opportunity to recount significant aspects on their native country, and create a relaxed atmosphere, of trust. Sufficient time is given for group members to become acquainted. The exercises must motivate the participants to get integrated and help them concentrate on the main objectives of the group.

1.1. *World map*: the counsellor outlines an (imaginary) world map on the floor and participants stand on their place of origin (where they were born). They each introduce each other in turn, saying their names and recalling several aspects they are proud of, linked to their birthplace (nature, climate, food, culture, etc.).

1.2. *Group interview*: pairs of two are formed and each interviews his/her partner in turn. The questions in the interview can be about family, moving from their native country, hobbies, etc. At the end they each introduce their partner to the group.

1.3. *The house I was born in*. Everyone must think about the house they spent their childhood in and tell the others certain things about it. The participants may share why they left their place of origin.

2. My life

2.1. *Living space*. The exercise aims the clarification of counselling objectives and the planning of professional development, but the discussion may go beyond the existing education, training, and employment offers. A holistic approach to the human being is adopted, targeting other dimensions of life alongside profession. Members are thus requested to examine their own life space and express it in various ways. At the end they explain these products to the group, their significance in relation to their own career. The counsellor intervenes to signal problematic issues and pertinent alternatives for each member.

2.2. *Lifeline*. Each client will freely illustrate on paper his/her own life in its various stages from birth to present. Group members will focus on key moments in their careers (school, choosing a specialty, changing careers, professional experiences, etc.). Since it is a time consuming exercise it will be assigned as homework, and in the case of immigrants they will be asked to highlight the difficulties encountered in adapting to the new cultural context.

3. Planning for the future

Group members are invited to develop a vocational plan that will include the training objective or the representation of the future job.

3.1. *My favourite future*. A vision of the future is drawn on paper, then a common attempt to identify the necessary steps to make the vision reality.

3.2. *My possible alternatives for the future*. Several scenarios are permitted, they are then compared, and the most attractive and plausible identified.

Adapting counselling to the communication style

Direct context presupposes mainly inclusion of information in the verbal message, and less in the context or relating it to the other participants. It is therefore compulsory when working with clients from cultures such as German, Scandinavian, American, etc. to become aware of their heterogeneity and individuality and use a direct communication style, characterized by independence, self-determination, and a considerable interpersonal

distance (Hofstede, 1994, apud Launikari, 2005). Clients from these cultures say what they think, their message is explicit, words are the main communication vehicle, essential to understand the message (Hall, 1997, apud Launikari, 2005).

Indirect context presupposes mainly including information in the physical realm and little information in the verbal message. When working with clients from cultures such as Japanese, Arabic, Thai it is necessary to recognize the client's tendency towards collectivism and homogeneity, their behaviour predictable, they work in united groups with a rich common cultural code that allows them not to be very explicit. Nonverbal clues represent the key to knowing whether the verbal message is the real message. The objectives of communication are keeping harmony and saving the interlocutor's face, confrontation is avoided, and criticism taken with great difficulty.

Management of intercultural conflicts

Conflict is a relationship between two or more individuals who consider their purposes incompatible, or a confrontation between two or more people that can lead to tension or violence. Unlike violence, which consists of actions, words or attitudes, structures or systems causing physical, mental, social, cultural, or environmental damage, or preventing people from reaching their full human potential, conflict *must be viewed as something normal, inherent to life situations* (Fisher, 2003, apud Launikari et al., 2005).

Consequently, a counsellor must give up the traditional view on conflict as an objective issue with a unique solution that presupposes individual opponents blaming each other, a win or lose situation, with legitimate use of power, or an unpleasant state to be removed. *The conflict must be regarded as a situation where no one has the monopoly over the truth, it involves various individuals or groups in reciprocal confrontation, a process that can lead to gain or loss for both groups, or where one wins and the other loses according to the way the conflict is managed, and represents a human reality present in any society.*

Multicultural relationships management and problem solving are based on the reduction of fear, understanding the other, and intercultural counselling. Xenophobic attitudes are often created and maintained through misinformation, ignorance, and harmful generalization; eliminating this phenomenon is possible through knowledge of the other, direct exchanges, equal commitment in common projects, dialogue and cooperation in terms of equality. By increasing interaction between the members of various social groups, false or negative stereotypes can be removed and proven unreal or unfounded. Direct exchanges yield in a brief interval information on the other related to looks, interaction style, dress code, age, gender, self-image, attitudes, etc.

As Jelking and Sajous (1995, apud Launikari et al., 2005) show, in order to be efficient with increased interactions in changing stereotypes, a counsellor must make sure of the following:

- group members must have equivalent status;
- they must participate equally in common activities, sharing common purposes;
- contact within the group must be personal and varied rather than superficial, although frequent;
- the process of change must be supported by representatives of the authorities.

In order to solve conflicts, a counsellor must adopt various approaches (Garba, 2005, apud Launikari and Puukari, 2005) like in the following table. A fundamental rule in approaching a conflict is *involving both parties, starting with the beginning of the resolve process up to product evaluation*. Thus it is ensured the paternity of the solution and it can be hoped to construct and support good relationships within the group and between groups.

Conflict solving methods		
Conflict type	Source	Intervention
Instrumental conflict	Tangible aspects, means, methods, procedures, structures	Negotiation, compromise
Conflict of interests	Allotting time, money, jobs, space, etc.	Direct negotiation between parties or their representatives in order to reach an agreement
Personal conflict	Identity, self value, loyalty, breach of confidentiality, rejection	Open and transparent communication so as to mutually understand needs, anxieties, interests or positions of the two parties
Conflict of values	Religion, politics, ideologies, and other deep beliefs	Since they cannot be negotiated, the solution is an honest and permanent dialogue for deeper mutual understanding and acceptance of everyone's right to be different

Target population

- ethnic, linguistic, religious, political minorities etc.;
- immigrants from different cultural areas;
- poorly educated people;
- broadly speaking any counselling situations involves multicultural aspects due to the extremely diverse experience of both counsellor and client(s).

Examples, exercises, case studies

Unpleasant counselling experiences (Launikari et al., 2005): Antoinette B., an African refugee in Norway, describes the sources of dissatisfaction in the counselling relation generated by a counsellor who did not consider multicultural aspects:

- paying increased attention to the woman in counselling the family (an immigrant couple) is frustrating because both clients come from a culture where women have a secondary role;
- the counsellor's lack of trust regarding her statements about family health and validity of vaccinations;
- the fact that Antoinette comes from a culture where feelings are not expressed openly made the counsellor ignore her displeasure, with negative effects on the counselling process;
- she had expected the counsellor to encourage her: "you are a nice person, you are strong, and you are going to succeed in this new country", which did not happen;
- she was never told that she could approach personal issues during the counselling session; all these issues have accumulated and she treated them exclusively at home as she had been used to in the culture of origin (many other immigrants she knew did not confess their real problems to the counsellor for fear they might get into trouble with the authorities).

Solving a social and religious conflict

The graduation exam for the 8th grade was programmed on a Saturday, but Adventist communities refuse to send their children to the examination, on the grounds that their religion forbids any kind of activity that day. Consequently, it is decided to postpone the examination for the respective religious groups.

Similarities and differences

The purpose of the exercise is to become aware of ways the clients of counselling services are similar in a secure and supportive environment. For this, seats are placed in a circle, one less chair than the number of participants, and they are asked to sit down. The person left standing in the middle of the circle is asked to continue the phrase "*Who has / is ...*" with something true about themselves and also valid for one of the people sitting down (e.g. ... *blue eyes?* ... *brown shoes?* ... *a teacher?* ... *from Algeria?*). One person sharing that feature will give up his or her chair to the person standing, and at the same

time try to find another seat by continuing with statements of the kind until someone else stands up. The rule is that once standing, they must continue with other similarity than the one that has lost them their seat. The counsellor will request participants to comment and will conclude that there are various degrees of similarity between people: *the culture pyramid* made up of *basic needs* common to all (rest, food, movement, etc.), cultural similarities in the *reference group* and *levels of personality similarities*.

Three people standing

The purpose of the exercise is to develop cooperation and group awareness. Seats are placed in a circle. The participants are invited to sit down except three who remain standing. The rule is that at any time only three people should be standing, and those who are standing must sit down again within 10 seconds. When somebody sits down someone else must stand up, when somebody stands up someone must sit down, and so on. The group must understand and compromise without talking so that there should always be only three people standing.

Evaluation

Advantages:

- attracts cultural minorities to counselling;
- relevant for clients from the minority group;
- clients are responsible for the solution found together with the counsellor;
- diminishes the incidence of multicultural conflicts;
- helps clients from minority groups integrate in school, and in social and professional life.

Disadvantages:

- it is difficult to completely eliminate the cultural grounds of thinking and action in spite of the theoretical multicultural training;
- the stress placed on minority identity is unjustifiably big; ignoring cultural similarities creates the false idea that these identities might be static, which will lead to difficult integration;
- communication language is often a problem;
- the influence of the members in a minority community is considerable, which requires considering the life context of the client.

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Metaphor in Counselling

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History

Metaphors are communication tools frequently used to conceptualise complex phenomena around us (Grant; Oswick, 1996, Ortony, 1993, apud Mignot, 2004). Use of metaphor often reveals a superior level of conceptual operation.

Metaphors were initially used as a technique of organization analysis (“Images of organization”, Morgan, 1986). In analysing organizations in terms of metaphor (*organization as a “machine”, “organism”, “culture” and “brain”*), Morgan explored the implications on understanding and managing organizations, and proved the usefulness of the method in creative and flexible problem solving. His experience prompted him to suggest “*the method of multiple metaphor*”, that is using all four metaphors in organization analysis in order to understand their various facets. “*No metaphor speaks the whole truth*”, however “*every metaphor is more or less applicable according to the situation... real understanding comes when we take into consideration several metaphors*” (Morgan, 1986).

Later, metaphors were used in organizational management, as a technique to analyse and describe the organization and problem solving. Creative conceptualisation of the organization through various metaphors: anthill, spider, the four rooms, etc. resulted in the apparition of the “creative management art” (Morgan, 1992, apud Inkson, 2002) that led to novel solutions for many organizational problems.

Theoretical background

Metaphors were initially associated with the figurative aspect of language and communication. Since it was considered property of poets and politicians, the method was not put to use in psychological research and practice, due to a low level of credibility and doubtful scientific value. A series of creative and flexible models were however reconsidered when scientific positivism was overcome, and metaphor adopted as an efficient evaluation and intervention technique in various fields of counselling.

Metaphor use in career counselling is more recent and seems to have at least two major effects: one on the conceptualisation of the career counselling process, and the other on the development itself of the process. Regarding the conceptualisation of the counselling process, “the metaphor battle” has led to the dethronement of the more classical metaphor match (Holland, 1997). The latter meant the overlap of personal and vocational characteristics, considering the career counselling process as having as main purpose identifying the right career for a person. It gave way to metaphors such as: “lack of frontiers” (Arthur; Rousseau, 1996), “self-determined apprenticeship” (Arthur; Inkson; Pringle, 1999) that increased the importance of fast and creative adaptation to changes in the social and professional environment. The purpose of counselling is thus considered to be the development of a proactive attitude regarding one’s career, which requires flexibility and positive opportunity management.

Changes in the career counselling conceptualisation process have a direct correspondent in the way it unfolds. The counselling process has become collaborative, oriented towards the exploration of the particular significance of one’s career or what we call “subjective career” (Gattiker; Larwood, 1986). Next to other techniques used in career counselling (narration, exercises of prompted imagery, graphic career representation, card sorting, etc.) metaphors can engage counsellors and clients in a creative approach to career exploration, making use of their potential of complex understanding career-related phenomena.

In view of economic, social and cultural transformations marking the present age, the quest for the rightful meaning and personal career exploration, as well as its relation to other segments of life, become important dimensions of the counselling process (Peavy, 1997; Savickas, 2000, 2001). Perceptions, emotions and personal values that are related to one’s career (“subjective career”) tend to be the most important vector to which a person relates, both to evaluate its current performance and to fix subsequent career-related expectations (Collins; Young, 1986). Using metaphors in counselling can help reduce the distance between theory and practice (Amundson, 1997) and seize individual aspects of the process.

Method presentation

Metaphors are generally a figure of speech used to underline the similarity between an action or an object, event or experience, on the one hand, and a sentence or widely used word, on the other (Gowler; Legge, 1989, apud Inkson, 2004). Its function is to “*communicate the unknown by transposing it into the terms of the known*” (El-Sawad, 2003) or to visualize a complex phenomenon through familiar images (Amundson, 2005a).

Metaphors are current in everyday career-related discourse, as well as in formal career theories (Inkson; Amundson, 2002). Common metaphors are: “path / way / route / track of a career”, “journey”, “decision tree”, “window of opportunities”, etc. Influential academic concepts are also formulated in metaphoric terms: “career rainbow” (Super, 1990), “career map” (Krumholtz, 1993), “career construction” (Savickas, 2002), “vocational personality” (Holland, 1997), “career anchors” (Schein, 1978), “career without boundaries” (Arthur; Rousseau, 1996). They trigger live and familiar images allowing thus a special and personal perspective of events. Career metaphors do not have the same status. They differ with respect to *reference and source*. Metaphors such as “journey” or “construction” come from a person’s *experience*. Others, such as “seasons” or “resources”, are based on *external views of the situation*. Metaphors like “ladder” or “competition” describe the circumstances of the career, and “anchors” or “vocational personality” describe *characteristics of the person* engaged in career development.

From the counselling perspective, metaphors, as a way of experiencing reality through aspects common to other situations, allow a deeper career analysis, integrating complex information on these phenomena in a simple image. In the counselling process, metaphors create the exploration context most favourable to a person and lead to discovering personal career-related characteristics and significances.

One of the most thorough presentations of the main career metaphors belongs to Kerr Inkson (2004). In the author’s opinion, career conceptualisations can basically be grouped around the metaphors resulting from the main theories in the field. They have influenced career conceptualisation throughout time and have become possible career metaphors themselves:

The inheritance metaphor

The metaphor expresses the concept that career, just like inheritance, can be passed from one generation to other; a person’s career is more or less inherited. Using this career metaphor, sociologists stress the role of social class, gender, ethnicity in determining the values and aspirations children get from their families. Moreover, this metaphor targets the career model existing in the family, and the financial and educational opportunities that children benefit from at home.

Inheritance in career refers to dimensions such as: social (social structure), genetic (inherited IQ), and psychological (parents' attitude towards work and career). Although some counsellors prefer to stress the active self-determined part of career-making (seen as "construction"), the inheritance component cannot be ignored, since it is in tune with a series of theories on career development (Gottfredson, 2002). A client becoming aware of the "inherited" component, of the extent this influence manifests itself, opens for him/herself the possibility to decide whether to relate to this component as to a major anchor or choose to build an autonomous career, different from that of his or her parents.

The construction metaphor

This metaphor is in agreement with career theories that stress the active part played in determining one's own socio-professional evolution. The metaphor evinces the importance of career planning, conceptualised as rational process requiring gathering information, setting goals, making logical decisions, etc. In explaining a metaphor, clients will frequently make recourse to the management of their own career through proactive behaviour. On the other hand, the metaphor may relate to intuition, decisions based on emotional elements, etc. The counsellor's role in case the client uses a construction metaphor is to facilitate the "putting together" of the client's career.

The cycle metaphor

The main career development theories include "ages" and "stages". In Levinson (1977) and Super (1990) careers are described in terms of sequences, stages corresponding to certain ages: "exploration", "stabilization", "middle-age transitions", "maintenance", "decline", etc. Levinson describes career development as a succession of seasons ("The seasons of a person's life", Levinson, 1977). The metaphor can become implicit in a person's thinking related to his/her role in society or profession. It can generate stereotypes regarding career development and professional role (Townsend, 1993). For example, elderly people living in dynamic environments that value change and development but conform to the ageing stereotype (according to which age means a decline in flexibility and adaptation to new or complex tasks) compromise their career development and settle for a low self-effectiveness in changing aspects of their careers.

In counselling one can choose changing the perspective on professional cycles in the sense of making them more flexible. A certain chronological age is not necessarily associated with a certain development stage (55 or 60 does not necessarily imply retirement).

The match metaphor

One of the most spread topics of vocational psychology is "the person-environment match" (Parsons, 1909; Holland, 1997). Since it is a strong tendency in the literature, the metaphor is important in career counselling because it is implicit in the personal career

theories of most vocational counsellors and clients. The “match” metaphor raises however both conceptual and practical problems. What are the most important characteristics of a person and of a work environment? How “measurable” are they and how accurately are they measured? etc. The critical problem the metaphor raises is promoting a statistical image of one’s career in the context of a dynamic process. In case of very quick or unexpected social, economic, and professional changes the metaphor may limit (psychologically speaking) one’s alternatives.

The journey metaphor

This is one of the most common career metaphors, mentioned both in literature and in everyday speech. The metaphor starts out by conceptualising career as a “geographic” movement between jobs, occupations, organizations, etc. The journey metaphor is attractive since it integrates movement in time and space, offering the possibility of grouping several information types under a single umbrella. The problem the metaphor generates originates in the very generic nature of the journey concepts. A journey can have countless characteristics: optional destination, fast or low, ascending or descending, etc.

In general, the journey metaphor allows career analysis from two perspectives: behaviour of the “traveller” (the micro component), and “the path” the traveller takes (the macro component). So far counselling has concentrated on the first component, while from the point of view of organizations the second component is more interesting. In career it is important to integrate the two major components of metaphor, and undergo complex career analysis from these various perspectives.

The social network metaphor

McMahon and Patton (1999, apud Inkson, 2002) stressed the necessity to integrate the system of social relations that model and are modelled by career into the concept of career. Thus, finding employment is closely connected to the person’s system of social relationships, which can offer information or recommendations in view of employment. To create a favourable social network has become a way of life. In addition, a series of micro-abilities have gained importance: personal promotion, impression management, reputation building, etc. A career is thus often conceptualised as “a personal work-oriented political campaign”.

The theatre metaphor – career as role

This type of metaphor has also been used in the conceptualisation of organizations, being seen as a scene on which employers (actors) play various parts, wear certain costumes (uniforms), and their activity is mainly “directed” by a manager.

People's actions represent role behaviours, by this definition of career, their answers to the expectations of their superiors, colleagues, underlings, etc. These expectations are formally described in job descriptions, internal regulations, and individual or collective work contracts. At the same time, organizational culture implicitly includes the expectations of the main or supporting characters. The results of these expectations are a multitude of "psychological contracts" that are continually negotiated and renegotiated (Herriot; Pemberton, 1996). Role behaviour gradually turns into a script that people use to "act".

Metaphor may include the idea of multiple roles. A person performs several roles at the time (e.g. employee, student, parent, friend, member in an association, etc.) and must play all parts given or voluntarily taken. Through counselling a person can be supported in examining and analysing the relationship between the roles played.

The economic metaphor – career as resource

For the past years, there has been a major change in career conceptualisation. One is no longer perceived in terms of "expenses", but rather in terms of "earnings". Staff management has turned into human resources management and managers often speak of their employees as of "their most important resources". Principally however it is not day-to-day work that represents the main resource, but an individual's entire career. Organizations promote the idea of career considering that individuals who value themselves will place their career at their disposal. They facilitate an employer's rise within the firm and offer opportunities for development and expertise in a certain field. The problem the metaphor raises is that of the ownership over someone's career. Who does career belong to, the employer or the organization? Metaphor consequently allows investigation of career ownership in the counselling process.

The narrative metaphor – career as story

Much of what we know about careers comes from people's "stories". In addition, we convey a series of information about our own careers from personal stories. There are infinite such stories, some less structured (spoken), other structured (CV, letters of intent, etc.). Stories about someone's career allow the investigation of patterns, career building modalities, and discovering means for continuing it.

Frequently, people's stories about careers have recognizable cultural or social elements. For instance, Osland (1999, apud Inkson, 2002) on studying narrations on career of some "expats", noticed common elements in the stories, structured around the ideas of: heroism, bravery, and individual journeys.

The narrative metaphor is very well represented in the media. Here we frequently meet career stories that turn into models, and individuals becoming product or company brands. In case of metaphor, the main problem is to discover the line between reality and fiction.

Aside from these metaphor categories, it happens that during counselling we find other metaphors, built on individual and cultural experiences of people counselled (Amundson, 2005a). Below are a few examples:

<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Significance</i>
<i>Anomaly</i>	<i>A deviation or removal from the usual way of doing things</i>
<i>Adventure</i>	<i>A risky initiative with uncertain outcome</i>
<i>Artisanship</i>	<i>Creative use of abilities in making a product</i>
<i>Kaleidoscope</i>	<i>Changeable patterns</i>
<i>Calling</i>	<i>Internal need, strong attraction towards an activity or environment</i>
<i>Exhibition</i>	<i>A way to display talents</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>Creating new organizations and structures</i>
<i>Puzzle</i>	<i>Pieces of an image to be formed</i>
<i>Ladder</i>	<i>Instrument for ascension</i>
<i>Zenith</i>	<i>The highest point; time or place of maximum force, prosperity or joy</i>

Counsellor and client may adhere to different, occasionally contrasting metaphors or may structure their concepts of self and world around a number of metaphors. They can be facilitators or obstacles in the act of counselling.

Using metaphors in counselling presupposes:

Identifying the metaphor / key metaphors and examining the career from this point of view

Career metaphors express both expectations and frustrations perceived by the client. Investigating these elements becomes important in the career exploration process. Metaphors are not just a form of expression, but also a way of structuring thinking. They describe reality in familiar terms, allowing seeing the events from a special perspective.

The career exploration process will thus be oriented towards elaborating client's metaphor. Each metaphor generated by client can be extended through questions, to clarify the significance of the various components of the metaphor. For example, for persons conceptualising career as climbing a mountain, it is important to be aware of their current position, starting point and goal, their fellow travellers, luggage, difficulties overcome or still lying ahead, etc. These issues aim to explore the metaphor-image and extend it to other aspects that can be metaphorically expressed. For instance, in the case presented above, the motivational aspect can also be explored, what prompted the person to choose this variant, and personal satisfaction derived from completing the climb. In addition, related metaphors may be explored, such as career as role, as relationship.

By focusing on a metaphor, clients externalise the problem-solving process, becoming more actively involved in identifying solutions.

Making perspectives flexible by introducing new career metaphors

Metaphors express a certain vision on career that can get the attention, but at the same time inhibit the vision's complexity and restrict the exploration process. This is why, starting from the multiple metaphor technique (Morgan, 1986), the authors suggest using several career metaphors. This way the counselling process leads to a more complex and realistic career perspective. The more flexible our vision is, the more career metaphors we will have, opening up multiple options (Amundson, 1997). Perspectives resulting from multiple metaphors can be complementary facets of a career, or be integrated in a complex and more realistic image of one.

Developing multiple metaphors is a second level strategy (following the exploration of the initial metaphor) that requests clients to consider a way of conceptualising their career from another perspective (e.g. from other people's point of view, which allows exploring their relationship with the others). Counsellors may propose a list of metaphors from which clients will pick one suited to them, or they may ask clients to propose other metaphors.

Target population

Adolescents

Expressing the metaphors we operate with is not only done through words, but also images. The access to our representations, through words, does not always allow seizing many details in real time. Alternative exploring modalities:

- a. drawing (Amundson, 1998). Through drawings we express both elements hard to phrase, such as the emotional component of a metaphor, and the relation between the elements of a metaphor;
- b. photography (Mignot, 2000, 2004). It is held that an important tool in identifying the metaphors counselees operate with is photographing the significant elements in their life.

In counselling adolescents or people starting out in life, one of the most important stages is discovering their values and principles, as well as their expectations from a career. Expressing them verbally calls for rigid or stereotyped metaphors in some cases. There are many desirable values in society that adolescents mention first, and are often merely statements.

In order to investigate the values and expectations of a person more deeply, images can also be used. The photographs taken by someone and those they relate to are a

metaphorical representation of the truly significant elements. In counselling, exploring metaphors this way holds two advantages: first of all, several photographs offer a comprehensive image of the client's system of values; secondly, periodically taken photographs over a longer period of time show how the client's representations change and they are a monitoring method of the counselling process. The longitudinal monitoring of metaphors through photographs is suitable for career guidance projects of high school pupils.

Thus, metaphors as career counselling instruments are not limited to a stage in the process, and are not used only to conceptualise the case or draw up the counselling plan, but can be used creatively in each stage.

Adults

Adults have an occasionally pictorial image of their career: they describe, narrate, and analyse it, trying to make sense of past events, present decisions and future plans. Each person has their own "glasses" through which they look at careers. The "glasses" can limit the capacity to see career in terms of alternatives, or on the contrary, can offer various perspectives on it.

Adults in search of a new job frequently come to counselling when they have an imagination blockage, an obtuse perspective (Amundson, 2005b). This is apparent in confusion, low self-confidence, and a feeling of helplessness related to new possibilities of career development. In this case, a counsellor's task is to enlarge the perspectives and open up new possibilities. Metaphors can engage both parties in a creative activity of exploring new career development perspectives. Clients can be encouraged to think creatively by means of metaphor, and this results in new attitudes and perspectives on their careers.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Stimulating creativity in career approaches by means of metaphor

Metaphor use in career counselling allows a creative approach to career development. By evaluating the process of metaphor creation, many career aspects can be investigated, which allows the outlining of a complex and complete perspective. Diverse exercises may facilitate / stimulate metaphor creation.

Snapshot

The exercise requires clients to describe their career metaphor in detail. Once a certain metaphor has been identified, counselees are encouraged to find concrete examples of ways this metaphor reflects in their real life. For instance, when identifying the ladder metaphor, the counsellor may investigate the way this metaphor affects expectations or beliefs. Clients may use formulas like “*I have to climb step by step in my career*”, which could mean they are not at all open to professional opportunities that do not constitute a step up by logical rigour. Everyday behaviour can also be an example of the influence metaphors have in the clients’ mind: an image implying progress in small steps (“*climb the ladder slowly so as not to fall off*”) may mean lack of pro-activeness. People avoid putting themselves forward so as not to fail.

Following such a procedure and analysing a snapshot offered by the client, can give us access to irrational personal beliefs, myths, and perceived barriers. For example, important components in investigating a metaphor from the perspective of snapshots are relationships with other people. Thus, if a person considers that no more than one fits on the same rung of the “professional ladder”, he/she will not have the courage to attempt reach a position occupied by a colleague. Using this type of exercise may modify perceptions and expectations by requiring more flexibility in thinking and behaviour. For instance, starting from investigation of the “*ladder*” metaphor, we might find that the “*ladder*” in the client’s mind is a wooden one, rather rickety and narrow. Without changing the metaphor itself we can replace the *ladder* with a solid, comfortable, wide one, allowing several people to stand on the same rung, with support for hands, etc.

Dynamics

This exercise allows the in-depth examination of metaphors from the perspective of the dimensions they involve. If in three-dimensional images we examine length, width and height, in case of a metaphor we may examine dimensions such as: continuity, relations, emotions, future perspectives, optimism, responsibility, cultural and social influences, self-confidence, etc. For example, approaching metaphor on a continuum means exploration of the metaphor from the level the client is at that moment in life, as well as comparison of metaphors in various moments. Clients may thus become aware of the metaphor dynamics and the way it acquires new meaning in time.

The perspective of the others

It is an exercise often used in most forms of counselling or therapy. Counsellors challenge clients to describe an image or an emotion “through the eyes of another”. It is a way of becoming aware of our subjectivity in given situations and of understanding that people guide their existence function of “another reality”. The exercise helps clients identify new angles to look at the same metaphor, as well as various meanings a metaphor acquires with every new perspective. Counsellors can guide clients throughout the exercise using the following types of questions:

“Do you believe other persons might be able to use the same metaphor for their career?”

“In what situation do you think another person could use the same metaphor?”

“Do you believe X would attach the same meaning to your metaphor?”

“What similarities and differences can you envisage?”

“How do you feel about your friend’s perspective?”

Discovering similarities and differences between various perspectives on the same topic allows to creatively envisage a situation and evaluate its facets, avoiding the risk of analysing metaphors in a linear way.

Timeline

Introducing timeline in personal career metaphor requires counselees to **look retrospectively and prospectively** along the timeline and indicate an appropriate metaphor for each time moment they focus on. Clients may be asked to remember certain moments in their lives and associate a career metaphor to those stages, or project in the future and choose an appropriate metaphor for that moment.

The exercise may stimulate a new metaphor, or the extension of the existing one. For example, in case of “mountain climbing”, the perspective of future may yield “the cycle metaphor”, since the mountain is only one of a mountain range about to be climbed.

Change of perspective

The exercise requires counselees to view the current metaphor through another metaphor. Thus, a client using a metaphor involving the growth and development image may be asked: *“What would your career metaphor look like as a journey?”* The exercise is to a certain extent similar to that of the perspective of other people. The difference is that if in a certain situation the client faces difficulties (or we notice resistance) in imagining the perspective of another person, we may propose this new reading of reality.

Group perspective

People associate a certain metaphor to their personal career, often fancying that it is the only way to conceptualise things, and considering that everybody else thinks the same way about their career.

The exercise intends to make clients aware of different perspectives on the same phenomenon. Clients will be asked to inquire friends and other people they know about how they see their own careers and in what terms / metaphors they would describe it.

Method evaluation

Advantages:

Information synthesis

The main advantage of using metaphors in career counselling is the capacity to synthesise a complex area of information in a relatively simple image. Metaphors allow people to integrate elements from various spheres: emotional, cognitive, behavioural, etc., which in certain situations are separate or the connection between them is far from evident. The role of this image is not only to describe “what it is”, but also to promote insights upon career (Amundson, 1988).

Each image has central and background elements. In counselling, reframing may involve shifting the stress from central to background elements and changing the importance of each element.

Operating with images

Metaphors help visualize situations. Using simple and familiar images we are in a better position to initiate career-related actions. In counselling, more often than not, efforts are directed to verbal persuasion. Although the importance of verbal exchanges cannot be disputed, the area of the counselling can be enlarged by activities using other means of knowledge or information support.

Information structuring

Metaphors can help structure and organize a situation. In case of confusion and lack of clarity, metaphors can help arrange elements and bring coherence. The link between reality and metaphor is double. Although we usually employ metaphors to better understand reality, it is not unusual to go back and forth between reality and metaphor, each helping build the other.

Reducing anxiety

People who seek career counselling often have unclear perspectives, are confused, anxious, with low self-confidence and a feeling of helplessness related to new career development opportunities.

In association with familiar situations, metaphors allow reducing anxiety and increasing the feeling of self-effectiveness. Transforming the unknown into familiar can engage one more actively in generating one's own options for solving the situation.

Developing creativity

Metaphors underline the similarity between an action, object, or experience on the one hand and a familiar event on the other. Same event can be conceptualised differently function of the personal experiences. Several perspectives on the situation create a

different perception of opportunities as well. Thus, one situation viewed from more than one perspective can open several problem-solving alternatives. Using multiple metaphors in career counselling enhances creativity in the given situation and identifies multiple options for solving the situation.

Disadvantages:

Erroneous interpretations

Metaphors are communication instruments so that the counselee is able to set the level and type of exchange with the counsellor. Although useful in career exploration, metaphors may occasionally lead to erroneous interpretations of the situation. It is necessary to clarify the metaphor and elaborate upon it to equalize the language and expectations of the two parties. The counsellors' role is to observe moments when the metaphor significances are divergent. In order to remedy such situations, the counsellor can come back to the unclear elements and accentuate certain components if misunderstood and erroneously integrated.

Blocking the creative process

Metaphors are expressions of our creativity and imagination, and if flexibly used they can open opportunities by creating different perspectives on events. Relating careers to a single metaphor or a rigid use of this metaphor may block creativity. Metaphors carry a vision of one's career and focusing on only one metaphor may limit the complexity of the vision. It is therefore suggested to use several career metaphors, and this way the counselling process will lead to a more complex and realistic perspective on one's career. The results obtained by using multiple metaphors may be complementary career facets or can be integrated in a more complex career image.

Lack of control

Metaphors are fluid structures. They are not fixed, and therefore not completely controllable. There are no algorithms for developing a metaphor. Metaphors represent instruments for the counsellor. Using at the same time more "objective" metaphors may offer a realistic image of the dynamics within the counselling process.

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Mass-media in Counselling

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History

We discover sources of mass communication as early as Caesar's time, 59 B.C., when "*Acta Diurna*" is issued in Rome, a daily journal that presented political and social events, the war front situation, legal decisions regarding birth, marriage, death.

It is to be noted that in 1605, "*Relation*" is the first newspaper published by Johann Carolus in Strasbourg.

The media becomes truly "mass-media" only in the 18th century by "*penny press*" allowing a vast readers base and mass access to printed information on a large scale.

In the last century, media development is spurred by the advent of cinema and radio, but especially television in the 1930s, to become mass extended in the last few decades.

"In the 1940s-50s, newspapers feared they would lose ground because of the radio. Then, the rise of television alarmed press people more and more, but the only result was better quality newspapers. With television widespread, *USA Today* began using large photographs to compete with electronic media. The Internet now changes habits. In 1994, the first *online* paper appears on the www" (www.mensa.ro).

These new media soon monopolize all social communication channels and revolutionize the post-industrial society, transforming it into an informational society.

The huge impact of mass-media on the public space has prompted many to call it "the fourth power in the state" or the "watchdog" of a democratic society.

The last decade of the 20th century witnesses a new wave of media: an increase in the influence of the Internet, mobile phones, and new digital technologies, allowing client-media interactivity.

Digitalisation facilitates the convergence of media and transforms it into “multimedia”, considered today the most modern modality to send a message.

Theoretical background

Starting from the etymology of the two terms (Lat. **massa** “a large quantity of aggregate entities”, **medium** – pl. **media** “means of conveyance”), **mass-media** is “an English term that refers to mass communication means”; but also defines those “sets of techniques and means of transmission by centralized providers of messages to large, heterogeneous audiences spread over a wide geographic area. From an institutional perspective, mass-media can be considered social, cultural and economic institutions” (Dictionary of sociology, 1993).

More information regarding the contents of the collocation can be found by analysing the opinions of experts in various fields.

For pedagogues in the 1970s, modern mass communication means were “modern means of conveying information (mass culture) to a large audience (masses of people), first of all radio, television and cinema, including large format printed material, disks, recording tape, etc.”, and audio-visual means were “a complex of educational means including both the integrated ones presented on visual, auditory or audio-visual support, and the technical equipment by means of which they are used or manufactured” (Dictionary of pedagogy, 1979).

From the managers’ point of view “mass-media is one of the valuable and efficient means of transmitting information to masses, that has considerably developed in the contemporary world, with particular receptivity and modelling / mobilizing influences on the public irrespective of age, profession and beliefs” (Schramm, 1982).

Currently, the academic environment laconically defines mass-media as “the technical means (newspaper, radio, television, cinema, etc.), which convey information to the masses” (<http://dexonline.ro>).

We conclude that at present **mass-media** is:

- a means of information and communication;
- making use of technical instruments and means / supportive technologies / institutions etc. of ever higher performance over time;
- to broadcast the latest news;

- with a view to modelling / mobilizing a large and very heterogeneous public (various ages, social status, professional status etc.);
- which is geographically widespread (regional, national, international).

Method presentation

No specialist or practitioner in career counselling (or any other professional) can conceive of doing without mass-, multi- or macro- media in their activity with clients, whether traditional, digital, or combined, nor can it be possible any longer in a society calling itself “informational” and where information / knowledge is essential.

There are several **criteria** to analyse mass-media in the service of counselling: financial, time, space, functions, goal / role, effects / consequences, and preferences of beneficiaries. These criteria call for two other distinctions, between:

- written and audio-visual press;
- mass-media processes and products.

And, there is finally the criterion of **competition** between “traditional” mass-media (belonging to the last century wave) and the latest generation mass-media (belonging to the third millennium – the latest wave): Internet, multimedia, digital-phones (see the articles: **Computer-Based Counselling** and **Computer-Based Information Management**).

We will briefly present the main types of traditional media still widely employed in parallel with the latest (multimedia and digital media).

Although in the beginning a clear distinction was made between (printed) publications, radio, television, and cinema recognized as successively appearing in the history of mass-media, there is currently a new classification taking into account the **support** of the message, so that publications are called written text (with paper as the solid support of the text), and all the rest are generically called audio-visual press (with the text electronically recorded and broadcast by means of radio waves).

The written press includes: newspapers, magazines, journals, brochures, posters, mass collections, leaflets, and documentary materials or even books that are published periodically by request.

According to the frequency of issuance, they can be daily, weekly, (bi) monthly, quarterly, or annual.

According to the format, they can be: magazines (A4), standard newspapers (A2), or tabloids (A3).

According to the circulation, there are international, national, regional, local, and internal press.

According to the contents, the written press can have general contents (big daily newspapers that approach varied topics) or specialized (most are weekly or monthly), function of their readers (gender-specific: women, men; age-specific: children, young people, elderly people; residence-specific: rural, urban; profession-specific: engineers, car-lovers, doctors, teachers, etc.) or the contents (economic, sports, cultural, educational, religious, etc.).

The audio-visual press

The criteria for written press apply here in part.

According to the broadcasting area, stations (radio or TV) can be local, regional, national, international.

According to the contents, stations can be general or specific, with local, regional, national, international broadcasting.

According to the role, stations (usually public) have cultural-educational contents, and the commercial ones broadcast entertainment shows.

The financing differentiates stations into public and commercial.

Sources of power (influence) of mass-media have their roots in information held and broadcasted, necessary for the safety of people, as well as the need of relaxation. The influence of the media is more intense when: the prestige of the source is greater, the monopoly of source is stronger, or the messages from the source are in agreement with the opinions of the beneficiaries. The influence of media also depends on how cultured the public is, how qualified to understand the functioning of the media, as well as the motivations, interests, or values of the beneficiaries.

Generally, in mass communication research two types of **analysis** have prevailed: contents (of communication, messages) and effects (changes in attitude, behaviour of the public as a consequence of contact with the media) (Cucu, 2000).

The media requires today due to its unprecedented expansion “**professional communicators**, specialized in conveying messages through various media and a **control system** of communication, through **institutions** (...)” (Coman, 2004).

Recommendations for counsellors regarding the use of mass-media resources

Statistically it has been found that radio and television are preferred by most clients regardless of gender and age, which can be explained if we take into consideration the psychological principles of associating perceptive stimuli in information reception. The consequences of such simultaneous perceptions of information are beneficial for memorizing and learning, but certain undesirable effects of reception through combined channels (audio-video-digital) cannot be neglected. In such cases:

- information directly penetrates the subconscious through subliminal stimuli;
- information is not always pre-verified (for accuracy, completeness, actuality), which gives counsellors the supplementary role of “filter” in relation to their clients;
- media communicators (journalists, reporters, editors, anchors) should know the field at least broadly, or be part of the network of counselling collaborators, together with psychologists, doctors, teachers, parents, legal advisors etc.;
- the tendency of very young generations to neglect the written press or even the traditional audio(visual) one (radio, public TV) in favour of the electronic press stimulates the counsellor’s role as “advocate” of these media types in counselling. “The role of leader no longer belongs to the written press. It undergoes a reduction of influence over the younger generations who prefer video games, chat, mobile phones. Pupils and students no longer read newspapers, they read e-papers” (Prof. Dr. Otto Altendorfer, the president of the Multimedia Communication Academy in Germany, in a TV show of December 2004);
- counsellors have the mission to counteract the tendency to “hunt down information”, superficiality and glossing over details – especially by children and adolescents – in contact with the electronic media;
- in close relation with school and family, counsellors have the responsibility to warn, prevent and fight the dependence on video technology apparent through attention inertia, passiveness, quick relaxation, “presentism” (action, live the moment, the visible, the sensational), aggressiveness, occasional violence.

In a word, counsellors must assist clients to make their way through “the informational thicket” and find a path through the multimedia jungle (Gheorghe, 2005).

Exploiting the incontestable benefits that the media currently offers to the counselling services, practitioners should not forget that media remain “valuable sources of mass information and communication” and that individualized, specific assistance is their mission.

Target population

By its nature, mass-media is addressed to all categories of potential beneficiaries of counselling services, regardless of age, aspirations, social and professional status.

It is probably the most widespread method among practitioners and has the greatest impact on the public.

People belonging to certain social and professional categories and the elderly might encounter difficulties in accepting electronic sources of information.

Examples, case studies, exercises

The written press

We have selected a few publications specializing in career information, counselling and guidance, employment, placement, etc. and that are issued weekly, monthly or bimonthly. Most are financed by the state or international educational projects of the European Commission.

There are however publications specializing in the field and belonging to private publishing houses, very professional and competitive. They evidently compete with the daily press and although no less professional, make efforts to hold out financially, often making recourse to sponsorship.

Adapting to the requirements of the market, some of these have opened their own websites and can be accessed *online*.

Romanian periodicals: *Careers (Cariere)*, *Capital*, *Education Tribune (Tribuna Învățămintului)*, *Pedagogy Revue (Revista de pedagogie)*, *A Future for Everyone (Un viitor pentru fiecare)*, *My Job, Jobs and work places (Profesii și locuri de muncă)*, *Work Abroad (Munca în străinătate)*, *Psychology Today (Psihologia azi)*, *School Universe (Universul școlii)*, *Exams (Examene)*, *Economic Messenger (Mesagerul economic)*, *Economic Magazine (Revista economică)*, *Financial Newspaper (Ziarul financiar)*, *Business magazin*.

Local periodicals: Bulletins and counselling magazines of the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Centres (Bucharest, Botoșani, Dolj, Gorj, Deva, Mehedinți, etc.) or of the Employment Agencies.

The advertisement and promotional press also deals with information on jobs: *Advertisements (Anunțul publicitar)*, *Advertisement from A to Z (Anunțul de la A la Z)*,

Telephone advertisements (*Anunțul telephonic*, www.anuntul.ro) etc., and the great majority of the big newspapers host job ads.

The electronic press

Many more are the online publications exclusively destined to clients who are familiar with the Internet: www.hotnews.ro, www.codecs.ro, www.carriereonline.ro, www.academiaonline.ro, www.comunicatedepresa.ro, www.recrutareonline.ro, www.markmedia.ro, , etc.

Radio shows

Radio offers a wide range of information and even counselling services during shows on general or specialized subjects, scheduled at prime time or in the early morning or late at night:

- *Romania to Report (România la raport)* – MixFM
- *Counsellor on the Spot (Consilier la rampă)* – station Romania Youth (România Tineret)
- *School Failure (Eșecul școlar)* – station Bucharest Antenna (Antena Bucureștilor)
- *Wisdom Tooth (Măseaua de minte)* – station Romania Youth (România Tineret)

TV Shows

- *Placement Agency (Agenția de plasare)* – TVR1
- *Jobbing* – TVR1
- *Star Job (Meseria – vedetă)* – TVR1
- *People Like Us (Oameni ca noi)* – TVR1
- *Horizons 2007 (Orizonturi 2007)* – TVR1
- *Celebrities of Your Time (Celebritățile timpului tău)* – TVR1
- *Together in Europe (Împreună în Europa)* – TVR2
- *Parents' School (Școala părinților)* – TVR2
- *9595 – Teaches You What To Do (9595 – Te învață ce să faci)* – Antena 1
- *European Horizons (Orizonturi europene)* – Prima TV

- *Stock Exchange – Labour Market (Burse – Piața muncii)* – FluxTV
- *Choose Yourself A Career (Alege-ți o carieră)* – Senso
- *Career – Where to? (Cariera – Încotro?)* – Tele7ABC

Media products realized through internationally financed projects by the World Bank, the European Commission and/or the Romanian Government:

a. Occupational profiles

450 occupational profiles have been elaborated and printed (making a 4 volume set), and distributed to the County / Local Employment Agencies (227 units), County Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Centres / Offices (500 units), as well as Youth and Sports Centres (47 units).

b. Posters

16 posters have been created and distributed on the following topics:

- Career planning, essential in a changing society
- Lifelong learning, the premise of success in careers of the 1990s
- The enterpriser
- Career guidance, a permanent process
- Career: chance or planning?
- Career-ama: display window of occupations
- Aptitude + Inspiration = Vocation
- Inform yourself on your career
- The Romanian initial and lifelong training system framework
- Choose yourself a career compatible with the third millennium and European accession
- Maslow's pyramid – the needs pyramid
- Choose a career path with counsellor's help
- Career, a bridge to the future
- Creating a positive self-image
- Option: Semaphore on a road leading to the future
- Career action plan: the Egan model

c. Career newspaper

Between 1997-2003, 10 issues of “*Un viitor pentru fiecare – A Future for Everyone*” came out, multiplied and distributed all over Romania in 1,200,000 copies. The subject matters included:

- world tendencies in the workforce market;
- current situation and Romanian workforce tendencies;
- dynamics of professions;
- learning, guidance, profession change;
- short- and medium-term strategies regarding adaptation of the workforce to the requirements of the transition society;
- occupational profiles;
- assessment and self-assessment instruments;
- legal framework of the labour market;
- ICT in career counselling;
- career planning as a lifelong process.

d. Video-tapes

10 tapes were produced on the following topic:

- How to behave in an interview?
- Job hunting strategies
- The Careers of the future
- How I became an enterpriser
- Keeping a job – building a positive attitude
- How to react to the changes of the occupational world?
- Traditional Romanian crafts
- The kaleidoscope of occupational profiles (3 volumes) grouped by activity fields
- Career without stress
- Professional counselling – alternatives for a successful career

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- communicates and conveys information to large masses of clients, in actual or real time;
- captures attention and conveys messages to a heterogeneous and geographically widespread audience;
- promotes freedom of speech;
- supervises the social environment, by critical problem analysis, having as effect information and protection / safety of citizens;
- informs, with the effect of increasing individual and social knowledge;
- signals and interprets public events;
- promotes the values of the market economy (professional competences, respect for work), changes the mentality of the helped with that of personal initiative;
- socialises (conveys norms, values, and civic attitudes);
- brings up solidarity and responsibility;
- relaxes, entertains, amuses, delights (in a word: offers entertainment as a consumption good);
- generates culture, immortalizes events of historic importance;
- sustains the economic development in general, and orients consumption;
- educates, instructs, shapes concepts about the world, outlines attitudes, cultivates aptitudes, models behaviours, guides, results in professionalism, counsels.

Disadvantages:

It is now unanimously recognized that the excessive development of the media and turning it into a consumption good for a super-industry / super-production induces negative effects specific to a boom period followed by a decline:

- non-stop broadcasting of audio / video channels generates fatigue, mental instability, anxiety, aggressiveness, dependency;

- information delivered to the audience is apparently free or at minimum costs, but the editing / publishing costs (for the written press) or the production costs (for the audio-visual) are ever higher due to technology development and competition.

For this reason, in order to “face big production expenses, many stations are affiliates of larger networks, or of a central station and take over some of its programmes” (Coman, 2004):

- taking over a certain subject from other news channels generates media mimicry and the snow-ball effect;
- causes stereotypes in opinions and attitudes, simplifies judgement and reasoning, generates understanding errors among the public (sometimes panic / mass psychosis);
- dictates wishes and mesmerizes through subliminal advertising;
- the chase after sensational and shocking is conditional for news selection, and induces “a warped image of reality and antisocial behaviour: violence, racism, prejudice” (Stavre, 2004).

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Problem Solving

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History

The development of problem solving as a counselling method is based on research carried on clinical and non-clinical population and a series of theoretical models (Nezu; Nezu, 1989; O'Donohue; Krasner, 1995, apud Mueser, 1998). The Stress – Vulnerability – Coping Abilities Model (Zubin; Sping, 1977, apud idem) and The Model of Social Skills (Bellack; Mueser; Gingerich; Agresta, 1997, apud idem) support the use of problem solving as a skill development method, which ensures adaptation and attainment of personal goals.

Before 1970, adaptative functioning skills such as social and emotional were conceptualised in strictly behavioural terms: eye contact, tone of voice, and contents of communication. At the end of the 1980s, research evinced the role of cognitive skills in adaptive psycho-social functioning and in implementation of adaptive behaviours (O'Donohue; Krasner, 1995, apud idem). For example, implementing adequate social behaviours is conditioned by the presence of cognitive abilities such as:

- **perception of relevant social parameters:** the public or private character of the social situation, the emotional response of other people;

- **extracting and interpreting the relevant social information** (e.g. *the other is offending me*) and formulating goals for social interaction (*I must defend myself*);
- **identifying alternative behavioural response** to attain goals (e.g. *I offend him/her in turn, I push him/her, I threaten him/her, I avoid him/her*);
- **evaluating advantages and disadvantages of implementing** each behavioural response alternative, optimal decision making.

These cognitive abilities are turned on automatically, without conscious control, and play an essential part in the adaptive psycho-social functioning. This is why the mere learning of behavioural skills does not ensure their use. Lack of cognitive abilities prevents the implementation of behavioural skills. Consequently, the development of behavioural abilities to solve daily problems, emotional or behavioural problems of pupils must be accompanied by the development of the corresponding cognitive abilities. The necessary cognitive abilities for the adaptive psychosocial functioning of pupils are reunited under problem solving skills.

Problem solving as a counselling method stresses the development of generalization cognitive abilities for using the learned adaptive behaviours in novel situations (Liberman and al., 1989, apud Mueser, 1998). Thus, pupils will be able to systematically apply problem solving to overcoming the difficulties they face in personal or school life.

Theoretical background

Problem solving has become over the past decades a counselling method applied both to adults and children. Applying the method in counselling initially aimed to develop abilities necessary in prevention or intervention in social (e.g. aggressive behaviour) or emotional problems of pupils (Davis; Bucher, 1985, apud idem). Currently, problem solving is no longer limited to clinical aspects (e.g. emotional or behavioural disorders in children), but applied to larger contexts such as educational problems of all pupils or career counselling.

Form the perspective of problem solving, counselling is a **process of learning problem solving skills**. Counselling is addressed both to pupils or a group of pupils, and to teachers and parents. The counsellor's role is to take part in the problem solving process the school faces: drop-outs or low academic performance, lack of motivation, skipping classes, lack of discipline in the classroom, etc. (see Table 1). Problem solving is a counselling method that applies to the following contexts:

- **career counselling:** decision making and problem solving are essential abilities in career planning;

- **counselling and guidance:** problem solving is one of the basic abilities included in the curricular area of Counselling and guidance;
- **psycho-pedagogical counselling** of pupils and parents for emotional and/or behavioural problems: defining the problem and identifying alternatives to solve the problems the pupil faces at school or at home;
- **psycho-educational programmes** addressed to children or adolescents: programmes developed by the school counsellor often include abilities of pupils seen as factors increasing life quality and also resulting in the decrease in frequency of behavioural or emotional problems.

Problem-solving is defined as the ability to recognize problems, formulate goals, and apply strategies to reduce the gravity of the problematic situation or to attain and improve the goals set. The counsellor's role is to teach pupils define their problem in operational terms, identify multiple solution modalities and apply alternatives that upon an analysis are considered the most viable. Pupils, teachers or parents are taught to accept responsibility for their own problems or difficulties, and solve them. Often, teachers, parents or pupils perceive the counsellor as a person who will give them a solution to their own problems. Moreover, counselling means developing certain abilities, which will help clients successfully solve problems on their own.

Method presentation

Problem solving in counselling involves the development of cognitive abilities in a specific succession of steps (D'Zurilla; Goldfried, 1971, apud idem).

These steps aim to take into consideration as many solutions as possible, and establish what is to be done in order to apply the solution. Whereas developing behavioural skills targets learning specific components, problem solving targets learning ways to systematically and rationally approach problem solving and reaching objectives. The first theoretical models of problem solving are based on the principles of operative learning, Skinner (1938) and Beck's (1976) cognitive theory. The stages of problem solving are presented below:

Table 1

1. Defining the problem

- Eliciting different opinions or perspectives on the nature of the problem.
- Defining the problem and the goal in specific, behavioural, operational terms.
- If more than one person shares the problem, making sure all the others agree to the new definition.

2. Generating alternative solutions to the problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating as many solutions as possible (without assessment) through brainstorming. • Creativity is important; any solution however unusual is accepted.
3. Evaluating solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciating advantages and disadvantages of each solution. • Evaluating solutions systematically, one by one. • Avoiding to decide on the best solution before evaluating them all.
4. Selecting the best solution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting the seemingly most efficient solution. • Evaluating the difficulty to implement the solution. • Choosing several solutions if they are easy to combine.
5. Planning implementation of solution / solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering the necessary resources for implementation: time, money, abilities, information, etc. • Anticipating possible obstacles in implementation. • Setting the implementation calendar. • Assigning people to tasks (if more people are involved).
6. Evaluating and revising the problem solving plan after implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning a follow-up to assess efficiency. • Modifying the problem solving plan if the desired results fail to appear. • Using all problem-solving actions even if the problem has not been completely solved.

Before the application of the method, the counsellor must evaluate and develop the pupil's attitude towards the problem, so as to support the problem solving. The pupil must be backed up in seeing the problem as *an obstacle that can be overcome* by exploring and applying various abilities and knowledge. Developing this problem-oriented attitude can be enhanced by offering examples of problems identified, their solutions, and the steps to the solution implementation. Long-term consolidation and immutability of the attitude is done by assisting pupils in identifying problems, practicing skills on personal problems, and by the experience of watching successful solving of problems.

Changing negative beliefs that prevent adaptation is the first step towards defining the problem. For example, there are attitudes of the kind: *"If you are in trouble you are weak, Smart people have no problems, I have no chance of solving the difficult problems I am facing or Nobody else has problems but me."* A problem perceived as an opportunity for development and change has much greater chance of being solved than a problem perceived as a personal failure or a sign of vulnerability. In order to develop a set of healthy beliefs, pupils can for instance be asked to comment and discuss the statements below, or list as many attitudes / beliefs on problems:

"Everybody faces problems."

"A problem is a challenge for change and development."

"Hiding or denying the problem is a sign of vulnerability."

Problem solving begins by identifying the situation pupils wish to solve and their personal goals. **Defining the problem** is essential to generate alternatives and solve it successfully. This is why a problem must be discussed in detail. It is recommended to use questions that facilitate the problem exploration and its correct definition such as:

In what way is this truly a problem?

For whom is this situation a problem?

What would happen if the problem would not exist?

Is there anything that could worsen the problem?

If in the definition stage several people are identified as being involved (teachers, classmates, family members), it is necessary to integrate their opinions. When the purposes of nature of the problem (e.g. career-related, emotional, interpersonal, financial) have been established, pupils must define it specifically in behavioural terms. The more specifically defined and the better outlined, the greater the chances of solving the problem. For example, “*My classmates are angry with me*” or “*I don’t know what high school to go to*” are only vaguely defined and no plausible alternative solutions can be identified. The specific definition of a problem (e.g. “*I don’t know what are the high schools where I could learn history in more depth*”), facilitate solution generation. It is recommended that big, complex, ambiguous problems be broken into smaller problems or purposes, each of them becoming a goal for problem solving.

Once the problem has been defined or its purpose set, the next stage is to **generate as many solutions as possible** to solve the situation or reach the goal. Pupils are encouraged to be creative, not to evaluate or censure ideas and solutions occurring to them. All solutions are initially accepted, since it is assumed that inadequate or totally inappropriate ideas may lead to identifying new or unusual solutions. Pupils who tend to be very critical of themselves need further practice in solution generation without being eliminated from the group at the very beginning. These situations may constitute an opportunity for the counsellor to approach their (excessive) self-critical thinking and give pupils homework that will enhance the development of self-image and the feeling of self-effectiveness.

Once the list of alternative solutions has been compiled, each solution in part is evaluated function of problem solving efficiency. This evaluation can be standardized by the systematic analysis of **advantages and disadvantages** of each alternative. After assessment, the best solution or solution combination is chosen. It occasionally happens that the best solution is evident right after analysing the advantages and disadvantages. At other times, no solutions appear to be superior to the rest. For example, several solutions appear to be equally efficient, and in situations involving more than one person disagreements may arise with respect to the best solution. In these cases, the best alternative frequently appears as a result of combining several solutions, constructing a new variant of the ones discussed, or choosing several alternatives and setting up a testing protocol.

Solutions to problems cannot however be proved efficient unless **implemented**. Moreover, diverse obstacles may interfere with the implementation process and make it inefficient. Consequently, planning the implementation of a solution is essential for the successful solving of the problem. In constructing the implementation plan it is recommended to take into consideration several factors:

1. If more than one person is involved in problem solving, the tasks of must be negotiated and decided upon.
2. The necessary resources for implementation must be identified and assessed (e.g. money, information, abilities).
3. Possible obstacles in the way of implementation must be identified, and a plan to overcome them must be drawn up.
4. For each action necessary for solution implementation a time period is set, as well as a moment for actual execution. The established time period includes an assessment moment on the way.
5. In order to ensure the efficiency of problem solving it is useful to establish periodic moments of assessing the current stage or the progress towards the goal.

If the problem has successfully been solved, another one can be approached. If the problem has not been solved and it is still there, the counsellor must assist the pupil in analysing the problem-solving plan and identifying the errors in the contents of the previous plan. To this end, it is recommended to take up the plan in reversed order until the identification of the inadequate sequence. At the same time, correct sequences of the plan are established and those that need to be modified.

The first step in analysing the solving plan is verification of its implementation. The plan may be correct, adequate to solving the problem, but implementation inappropriate. If this hypothesis is not verified, it means sequences of the plan must be changed to make possible the application of the selected solution.

If the plan has been adequately implemented and is correct, this means the solution selected is not efficient, and consequently one must return to the moment of identifying a solution and choose to solve the problem differently. In case a new solution is chosen, a new implementation plan is necessary. If none of the originally generated solutions work, new solutions and implementation must be generated.

If all viable solutions identified have been tried, correctly implemented, and the problem is still unsolved, it is recommended to redefine the problem. The new definition outlines a new problem with a higher likelihood of being solved in the respective context (people involved, individual abilities, time and space).

Target population

The method targets all categories of clients of information, counselling and guidance services: pupils, young graduates of various education and training programmes, adults.

Examples, case studies, exercises

As presented above, problem solving can be applied by school counsellors in many school activities, both with pupils and with teachers and parents. In what follows, a series of applications of the method in individual or group counselling are presented, and some relevant examples are offered of psycho-educational programmes developed starting from this method.

Problem solving in counselling

Problem solving is an efficient method for the current activity of teachers, pupils and parents. Often, in the counselling office or during Counselling and guidance classes, pupils and teachers present vaguely defined problems, much too general, and ask the counsellor for help in their solution. For example, pupils may report problems such as: *"I don't get along with my parents, I don't know what to do after graduation. I want to communicate easier with my friends and classmates."* Parents may come up with problems such as: *"My child is disobedient and naughty, My child learns too little."* Teachers in their turn request solutions to other problems: *"Pupils are only interested in money and don't care about school, They don't learn anymore, Pupils are undisciplined during classes."* There are no solutions to such vague problems. The first step is to help pupils, teachers or parents define through observable behaviours the "problem" in order to identify viable alternatives together.

In order to give examples of the way problem solving may be used in the work of a school counsellor, we present a case study (Littrel, 2001). The research has evinced the way the counsellor integrated problem solving as a method in solving school problems initially vaguely and generally defined. The case study shows the way the counsellor defined a problem in measurable and modifiable terms starting from a global, vaguely defined problem, and turning it into an operational problem with viable solution alternatives. The programme lasted for two years and aimed to assess the effectiveness and applicability of the method in the activity of school counsellors. We present the application of the method by stages of problem solving.

Defining the problem. The counsellor started his activity in a small town, in a school located in a neighbourhood with numerous social and economical problems. The initial problems are described as follows:

“It was all very difficult,... I mean the school, the pupils, the teachers. There were at least 30 serious fights a month. The pupils did not feel safe, the teachers were discouraged. In the first days the teachers sent at least 30 pupils to my office. No pupil came to counselling willingly.”

The counsellor called the initial stage of the problem a “chaos”. On analysing and making the problem operational the following specific problems were identified:

Problem no. 1: the teachers were overwhelmed and failed to deal with scandalous behaviours of pupils during classes.

Problem no. 2: the pupils were far from being skilled in problems solving and conflict management, and almost all problems were solved through violence. The pupils considered violence one of the most efficient means of dealing with a conflict.

Problem no. 3: the pupils showed very little respect to the others (other pupils, teachers, parents) and the school.

Investigating solution alternatives. Analysis of problem no. 1 also identified the fact that teachers lacked class management skills, and knowledge on discipline and behavioural management. Faced with indiscipline, teachers often raised their voice in order to settle the problem or have used other punitive methods. The results were obvious: more and more indiscipline. Pupils’ behaviour did not change the way teachers wished. Another method employed was sending the pupil believed responsible to the principal or the counselling office in order to solve his or her “discipline-related problems”. Teachers were convinced that pupils had a “mental” defect that the counsellor was bound to “fix”.

Analysis of problem no. 2 identified that pupils used violence and aggressiveness as one of the most widespread method of settling disputes among themselves and occasionally with their teachers.

For problem no. 3, as a reaction to “disrespectful behaviour”, the teacher’s intervention was “*I have told you a hundred times to stop!*” or “*I am trying to help you.*” What the pupils learnt from this message was that the adults were responsible for their behaviour, and not themselves.

Formulating aims. The counsellor proposed formulating gradual aims, in positive terms “the pupils *will be* able to...” instead of “The pupils *will not...*”. For problem no. 1 the aim was phrased as follows: “The teachers will solve their behaviour problems in class.”, for

problem no. 2: “the pupils will solve their own problems in class or on the playground.”, and for problem no. 3 “The pupils will show respect to the others.” In order to reach these very generous goals a series of concrete actions were identified. Each problem was formulated in terms of easily measurable and observable behavioural terms. For example “respect” meant a list of behaviours of pupils and teachers. Progress was measured function of the acquisition of these operationalized behaviours.

Implementing the action plan to produce change. Interventions for problem no. 1: The counsellor began by changing the teachers’ and pupils’ perception of the counsellor’s role in the school. The most part of the programme took place in class with pupils and teachers or on the hallways during breaks. The objective was that both pupils and teachers get to know the roles and responsibilities of the counsellor in the school. The counsellor was present during classes and in the school (and spent very little time in the office) for 2 years, until the perception of the counsellor’s role has changed.

During classes, the counsellor engaged in activities with pupils in order to solve problems, essential to reduce behaviour problems in class. The teacher was encouraged to take part in counselling classes in order to learn class management methods based on behaviour change and problem solving. Another complementary method was a *training* with all teachers at the beginning of the school year, centred in problem solving and class management (e.g. formulating rules and their consequences).

For problem no. 2 the class sessions also had results concerning pupils behaviour and problem solving. The pupils learnt non-violent problem solving alternatives. The counsellor also put together a group of pupils who learnt conflict management methods to intervene during breaks, in the schoolyard or in sports classes. The programme is based on *peer education*. The pupils with the role of **conflict mediators** wore an orange vest during breaks to be easily noticed.

For problem no. 3 the counsellor organized various activity types. First of all, psycho-educational counselling groups were renamed “clubs” and each activity had a fun and attractive name (e.g. “*Achievers Club*”, “*Bomb Squad*”, “*Lemon AID*”, “*Colors of Invis – ABILITY*”). In addition, activities meant to develop problem solving skills and taking on responsibility during class were continued. The counsellor engaged the teachers in monitoring pupils’ activity from the point of view of the behaviour label called “respect”. Applying behaviour management methods in class instead of punitive behaviour indirectly increased pupils’ “respect” for teachers and the other way around.

Results: the programme lasted two years, during which the counsellor attended classes with every grade, each pupil went through a full program of problem solving and conflict management. 6 pupils clubs were formed. After two years of intervention a relevant assessment indicator was the frequency of teachers’ resorting to the counsellor’s aid, which decreased up to 4 a day as opposed to the initial 30. At the same time, pupils were trained as conflict mediators in the school. Special situations of violence decreased from 30 a month to 2. The progress was maintained three years after the intervention.

Problem solving as assessment and monitoring

Problem solving can be employed as a method of assessing the efficiency of the counselling session, or of a psycho-educational programme developed in the school (Brown-Chidsey, 2005). Each stage is extremely important in a counselling process since the problem presented by a teacher or pupils often needs defining and clarification. Ordering problems is a necessary ability both for teachers and parents. For example, a parent may request the counsellor's aid in various instances such as: "My son slashed his new jeans under the pretext of fashion." What is the parent's problem? What is the young man's? What is the role of the counsellor in solving the problem? The table below offers a data collection grid to assess the problem.

Table 2

Stages of problem solving	Assessment procedures	Decision assessment
1. Identifying the problem	Observing and recording pupil's behaviour	Is the problem real?
2. Defining the problem	Quantifying the discrepancies perceived (between the current situation and what is desired for the future)	Is the problem important?
3. Implementation plan	Exploring alternatives and solution hypotheses	Which are the most effective hypotheses?
4. Implementing the intervention	Monitoring intervention accuracy and data collection	Does the solution applied yield the desired progress?
5. Solving the problem	Re-quantification discrepancies	Is the problem solved?

Psycho-educational programmes that integrate problem solving

"ABLE" (Attribution, Behaviour, Life Skills Education)

ABLE (Hay, et. all, 2000) is a psycho-educational programme created to increase the efficiency of career education through developing self-knowledge, problem solving and conflict management. The grounding theories are cognitive, centred on problem-solving and learning. Self-knowledge is one of the basic skills in career developing and planning. The way a pupil perceives himself or herself has great influence on school performance (e.g. negative perceptions of one's self: "*I cannot learn*" or "*I am good for nothing*"), learning motivation (e.g. low motivation "*What's the point in learning?*"), pro-social behaviour and general wellness. Unfavourable self-perception leads at the same time to low educational and professional aspirations and negative attitude towards school.

These categories of interventions are addressed to teenagers enrolled in a career development programme.

Description of intervention: the programme is structured on a series of problem solving and conflict management activities. The strategies of problem solving were adapted from Bransford and Stein (1984, apud Hay et al., 2000), called **IDLCAR** (Identifying the problem, **D**efining the problem, **L**isting possible options, **C**onsciousness of emotional states, **A**daptation and implementation, and **R**eflection). Conflict management strategies were adapted and modified taking into account the model developed by Schmitz (1991, apud Shure, 1997), **ASSIST** (**A**rranging a meeting, **S**etting the earliest date for discussion, **S**eeing the person's behaviour rather than the person, **I**dentifying and expressing the consequences of others' behaviour on yourself using the "ME" method – "*It bothered me when you were late for the meeting because we are left with very little time together*" – **S**ettling on a preferred result, **T**iming a mutual engagement).

The programme takes 6 consecutive weeks, with 11 work sessions and an introductory one, each lasting for 45 minutes. A typical session involves approaching problematic situations and conflict situations by generating multiple solutions, perceiving a situation from different perspectives. The cases discussed during sessions are either brought up by the young people or proposed by the counsellor.

Results: efficiency studies (Hay et al., 2000) have evinced a significant improvement in the way teenagers approached the various problematic situations or conflicts in their day-to-day lives, and an increase in their career development aspirations.

"I Can Problem Solve"

The programme "***I Can Problem Solve***" – **ICPS** was created by Shure (1997) starting from cognitive problem solving theories. It aims to be a relevant predictor in school adaptation and developing pro-social competences. It is a psycho-educational programme that unfolds in order to improve children's abilities to generate alternative solutions to the interpersonal problems they are confronted with. The pupils are taught to take into consideration the consequences of these solutions and stimulated to identify their thoughts, emotions and reasons behind the problematic situations. The programme sets out to teach pupils how to think (and not *what* to think), develop their cognitive skills and consequently improve their social adaptation, encourage pro-social behaviour, and decrease reaction impulsiveness and violence.

The programme was developed for pupils in secondary school but it is also effective for preschool and primary school children.

Description of intervention: the programme is applied to groups of 6-10 pupils for 3 months. The interventions begin with 10-12 group sessions (lasting 20-30 minutes), in which the counsellor teaches the pupils basic problem solving and decision-making skills. These skills are: generating multiple solutions, anticipating the consequences of certain decisions, identifying and recognizing the other's perspective on a problem. The children profit by this opportunity in order to learn concepts such as:

- “*some / all*”: a solution is efficient for a person but not always applicable to any persons and in any situation;
- “*or*”: the message – we learn to identify as many as possible alternatives to a problem;
- “*if ... then*”: any action has consequences on one’s self and on others;
- “*similar / different*”: any problem has multiple solutions, the same problem in different contexts or moments may have other solution alternatives.

The next 20 sessions focus on identifying one’s own emotions and those of the others. Children learn to recognize and identify their emotions in various problematic situations, and exercise ways to generate alternative solutions. In the next 15 sessions role-play is used in order to practice problem solving. Children generate solutions to hypothetical situations and analyse the consequences of their own decisions.

The results of efficiency studies (Shure, 1997) have evinced an improvement in problem-solving abilities, an increase in the frequency of pro-social, behaviour, positive interpersonal relations with colleagues, and a decrease in the frequency of impulsive or aggressive behaviour in pupils during classes or breaks. This progress was maintained 4 years after the implementation of the programme.

“Improving Social Awareness-Social Problem Solving”

The programme “***Improving Social Awareness-Social Problem Solving***” – Elias (1986, 1997, apud Rixon, 1999) is based on a psychological theory about the role of pupils’ *coping* abilities in decision situations, and the consequences on behaviour. The programme was developed especially for subjects in stressful situations, such as passing from primary to secondary school, or from secondary school to high school, or exam situations (e.g. assessment tests, admission to high school, college or university). They learn and practice problem solving and decision-making skills.

The content of the intervention presupposes elaborating a strategy that includes three phases: awareness, learning, and application. The first phase consists of promoting self-control, participating ingroup activities, and becoming aware of what causes stress. Pupils are taught to identify stress, recognize its sources, personal reactions to stress, and ways to adapt. The learning phase involves practicing the steps necessary for problem solving and decision making in social situations, focusing on problem analysis, anticipating obstacles, and formulating aims and objectives. The first two phases include 20 sessions (40 minutes each), twice a week. During sessions, the following work methods are employed: group discussion, role-play for decision making, case studies with problematic situations, etc. It is recommended to encourage pupils identifying problematic situations they or their colleagues have been faced with, or anticipate problematic situations. An example would be finding one’s place in the 5th grade (transition moment in Romanian education system, from primary to lower secondary school) with new classmates and teachers, as well as a new curriculum. Children identify within the group possible

problems that may occur and suggest solution alternatives plausible for each problem identified. The solutions found could be discussions with 6th graders on how they adapted and what difficulties they encountered, getting to know the teachers of the 5th grade, inviting some of them to current class in order to talk about their subject matters, attending 5th grade classes, visiting the classrooms, etc.

The application phase involves the counsellor strengthening each progress made by pupils in applying problem-solving skills to natural contexts. It is the counsellor who will mediate problems and conflicts children encounter in real situations, as well as teach children to apply the skills learned in the first phases to concrete life situations. Pupils are encouraged to use their problem solving abilities in daily activities with the support of teachers. Each pupil is responsible for practicing one skill learned at least once a week. The counsellor is in charge with monitoring the pupils' progress for at least a school year.

Efficiency studies (Elliot, 1987; Rixon, 1999) for this programme have highlighted a better awareness of stress sources pupils come in contact with and a more frequent application of *coping* methods to problem solving. The effects were maintained 4 years after the application of the programme. The limits of the programme were identified at the level of methods to assess pupils' progress in the acquisition of skills developed through the programme.

Method evaluation

Problem solving has a wide applicability. According to the complexity of the problem and the formulation of the case, it can be used either as a unique intervention method or as a complementary method in an intervention package.

Becoming aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the method facilitates its efficient selection and application, function of the target group's or person's characteristics (Mueser, 1998).

Advantages:

- applicable to varied contexts: individually, pupil group, family;
- efficient as primary intervention in emotional or behaviour disorders;
- beneficial in dealing with problems related to anger, assertiveness, social anxiety, in developing job hunting skills, in couple counselling.

Disadvantages:

- inefficient if isolated, as secondary prevention or intervention. Recommended in combination with other techniques in alleviating disorders (e.g. stress inoculation technique, relaxation, cognitive restructuring for anger management intervention, cognitive techniques for intervention in depression, exposure technique, progressive desensitisation for intervention in anxiety).

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Decision Making Techniques

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History

We currently have considerable information and data regarding decision making, through the contribution of mathematicians, economists, psychologists. It is certain that good decisions lead to good results, whatever the field of application. We also know that decision-making is an acquired skill (Anderson, 2002), which is why some American universities teach decision psychology courses (generally centred on presentation of results from research and theoretical explanations as declarative or factual knowledge), but not enough weight is given to decision-making practice and the respective skills.

Decision making has always been a priority subject and a strategy element in the political and economic life, while in today's lay world is what separates the worthy and goal-oriented individuals from those who are as entitled to success, but nevertheless expect others or fate to decide for them.

Theoretical background

We make decisions on a daily basis, except not all involve mental mechanisms of a rational kind. Decisions with minimum impact on one's self – such as ordinary, routine, neutral, irrelevant or non-diagnostic – do not require deliberation, or we can say that the decision-making process unfolds automatically along with one's life style, values, and experience. In exchange, big stake decisions – such as choosing a job, a career pathway,

one's life partner, residence, medical intervention – reunite interests, energies, and perspectives that are essential to one's general welfare.

Counsellors must be aware of the personality resources activated in decision-making, the specific tendencies of certain categories of people and in certain activity fields, and be capable of signalling their effects on the individual and society. Pre-eminent in this exercise are the alternatives identifies at an individual level, the system of values belonging to the person making the decision, and their availability to make the most of the given conditions.

In the specialized literature, Brown (1990) and others identify **normative models** (prescriptive – *how decisions should be made*) and **descriptive models** (heuristic – *how decisions are actually made*).

A normative decision making model is the **rational model**. It involves the following stages:

- *gathering information* on the subject matter from various sources and through various channels (reading, talking to competent people, interviews with beneficiaries);
- *information processing or analysis* through reflection, use of information in work contexts, commenting upon it. Activities in this stage contribute to clarifying and understanding the range of existing possibilities on the basis of criteria (objective and/or subjective) for judging the advantages and disadvantages, and comparing alternatives;
- *choice*, consisting in engaging the person in action related to a certain option, considered at a given time as having the most favourable consequences;
- *implementation*, as the final moment of a decision.

The decision may be an *internal action* (e.g. “*I have decided not to regret my old job anymore.*”) or *external action* (e.g. “*I have decided to ask for letters of recommendation from my previous employers.*”).

The decision rarely follows a rational path and is never linear. In fact it is “*hidden, elusive, unsystematic and occasionally irrational*” (Egan, 1998, apud Cossier, Schwenk, 1990; Etzioni, 1989; Stroh, Miller, 1993; Gati, Krausz, Osipow, 1996), since it integrates feelings, deep emotions, active values, interests, one's perception of how things work at the social level.

The second category – **descriptive models** – includes representative theories for our field of interest:

The classic client-oriented counselling model (Rogers, 1951) places at the centre of the discussion the *reaction*, rather than the *intervention* of the practitioner in the processes initiated by clients to becoming aware of themselves (including the professional self) and making decisions. To cultivate and maintain the non-directive perspective, the counsellor must develop an ability to interpret and incorporate the non-verbal behaviour of a client into the effort of building a relationship based on unconditional respect, empathy, and sincerity.

The conflict-based decision making model (Janis; Mann, 1977) is descriptive / heuristic and seizes the process in its complexity. Each relevant personal decision is made in a context that is not lacking in unfavourable factors or risks to trigger internal conflict. The stress level generated by this conflict is dependant on the aims, needs and expectations associated. Possible behaviours in life situations requiring important decision making are: *defensive avoidance* (recourse to the simplest alternative) and *over-vigilance / panic* (exaggerated or selective attention paid to certain aspects); an optimal behaviour implies *vigilance*. The authors say that a “good” decision (in which not all stages are exhaustively compulsory and the approach to decision takes after the problem solving personal style), follows the algorithm below:

- complete evaluation of alternatives;
- clarification of aims and values related to these alternatives;
- weighing positive and negative consequences of each alternative;
- seeking new, relevant information for subsequent and deeper evaluation of alternatives;
- collecting and taking into consideration without any bias of the new information and/or expert opinions;
- re-assessing the consequences of all alternatives, even the ones initially considered unacceptable;
- planning the implementation of preferred alternatives, paying particular attention to possible risks.

The social learning model (Krumboltz, 1983) postulates the idea by which career-related decisions are the product of an unlimited number of learning experiences that are the result of meeting people, institutions and events in one’s specific environment. The author describes *the occupational option as a process of social learning* where genetic endowment, particular context, personal learning experiences and problem solving abilities work together to define the self-image and the world of work.

The model of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 1996) is also a descriptive model. It focuses on the process of compromise in professional decision-making and describes how to come down from a large number of existing options. The

acceptable professional alternatives are successively selected, and three categories of “*tolerable limits*” are circumscribed: gender identity, prestige, and effort. The final choice is the result of a compromise between the level of renunciation the person is forced to in the situation, and the actual perception of this compromise. On the basis of experimental studies, there have been formulated the following *rules* of reaching a compromise:

- the relative importance of gender identity, prestige, and effort depends on the severity of the compromise;
- a good choice will be sought rather than the optimal. The effort involved in gathering and analysing the information necessary for the optimal choice may be too big;
- unsatisfactory choices will be avoided by persevering in an inefficient option, subsequent seeking of alternatives, reconsidering the effort limit or postponing decisions and commitments;
- people get used to making compromises in work (in order to satisfy their professional interests); it is however little probable that will should get used to low prestige, or to an option pushing the tolerable gender limit.

Self-tuning in decision-making (Omodei; Wearing, 1995) is presented from the point of view of counsellors who need to actively seek additional information and integrate it. At the same time they must decide in real time what kind of *feedback* to give clients, since it further determines the structure of statements and common decisions. Bobevski and McLennan (1998) state that complex decisions originate in *motivational processes*, which generate *intentions, emotions, focusing attention*, and decisions translated in *concrete actions*. People perceive these actions and their results with an impact on emotions, by having their attention and subsequent decision-making processes influenced, and getting involved in new actions. The model puts forth the idea that in any situation decision makers *seek reactions* in their environment and *act* so as to (re)gain control. Efficiency in a decision-making situation stays in the ability of human subjects to control not only their cognitive and attention resources, but also the emotional and motivational state. The studies of Bobevski and McLennan (1998) show that increased efficiency does not necessarily have to be associated with emotional detachment of the counsellor from the client, but rather with a *level of emotional involvement corresponding to the task*. Counsellors who reported very high levels of involvement were open to perturbing or irrelevant thoughts regarding the clients’ needs. A major source of anxiety for a counsellor could be “*the self-perceived feeling of failure felt on controlling the progressive succession of interactions intended to support the client*”.

Counsellors do not put themselves in the clients’ position in order to make a decision, even if they find the situation clear from a formal or theoretical point of view. Counsellors give personalized assistance in clarifying the forces, interests, practices involved in the problem brought up by the clients, help them discern their own advantage and possibility of growth. However tempting the path of rational decision, it relies on and

includes emotional decisions, and takes into consideration a multitude of consequences on the person, compared to others that are socially significant.

Method presentation

In the theory of social knowledge (Aronson, 2004) there is a principle according to which the way we interpret social events depends on what we currently think about the given topic, the beliefs and categories used to interpret things. In this context the following *procedures* are mentioned to function also at the level of decision making in relation to information:

*Priming*⁹ is based on the fact that recent or frequently activated ideas are susceptible to be recalled especially in the interpretation of social events or when getting impressions of others. Our experience and most often the authorities engaged in shaping public opinion direct our preferences and offer common criteria to judge our own success. This is in part why we witness waves of appreciation and depreciation of certain professions and occupations, at the individual or social level.

*Framing*¹⁰ influences the way we build the social world by presenting problems or decisions in certain terms, as potential sources of gain or loss. A simple rephrasing of options and stressing the sensitive arguments for each person/group involved produces a dramatic change in answers, since we all fear failure and seek to avoid it.

Ordering accounts for the way we arrange and distribute the information obtained. Information may carry the following attributes: *primacy effect* (with a few exceptions, the first impression is decisive and persistent, especially when we do not control the order in which we learn information) and *quantity* (sometimes abundant information helps strengthen opinion / decision, whereas at other times it may divert attention from the essential by the “*dilution effect*” or may change the perception and assessment of the object).

Judgement heuristics make use of “mental shortcuts”, approximate rules of problem solving, stereotypes proved functional and accepted, educated guesses. We notice *representative heuristics* (considering some features to be compulsory for an entire class of derivations), *available heuristics* (other examples in supporting a decision), and

⁹ The study by Higgins, Rholes and Jones (1977, apud Aronson, 2004) proves a connection between the events recounted by the press and what public opinion seems to consider the most important event at a given time. The explanation is that the media renders certain concepts and relations accessible and prepares the political and social agenda of the public.

¹⁰ The study by Gonzales, Aronson and Constanzo (1988, apud Aronson, 2004) shows to what extent subjects are willing to spend a considerable sum of money for sealing off their homes against extreme temperatures. The first lot find out how much they save if they make the improvement, while the second lot is informed on how much they lose if they fail to make the investment. The subjects exposed to the perspective of “losses” were twice as willing to pay.

attitudinal heuristics (determining features that are favourable or unfavourable). We use the heuristic approach in the following situations:

- not enough time to think through the problem;
- we are overwhelmed by the volume of information and find it hard to process it fully;
- the problem is not important;
- we lack solid information to base our decision on.

Dissonance is the factor intervening when we no longer have the guarantee that the alternative we select from a range of alternatives is the best. Once we have taken a decision of some kind we develop – naturally or with professional help – a behaviour of conscious neglect towards the implicit unwanted effects of the respective decision. Later on, we look for information favourable to that decision and we attempt to get confident that it is indeed a good one.

The “*foot in the door*” technique refers to obtaining or inducing the person’s agreement with certain aspects of the tasks that would have been otherwise refused in its entirety. Involvement in the progressive reaching of some professional standards is a challenge that creates devotion to the cause, attachment to the values of the group, team effort. It is the prerogative of the formal or informal leaders to ensure the task management, and if performed with talent the final effects are viewed with satisfaction by every contributor.

Anderson (2002) completes the chart with the following techniques:

Screening helps reduce alternatives by attributing a single characteristic to each and refusing the compromise. The initial selection of alternatives is vital, since once started, the process unfolds with the initially selected material. The technique is representative for ethical decisions.

“*Fighting giants*” proposes, like in childhood fairy tales, the use of knowledge and expert advice to structure the problem to be decided upon.

The network invites the decision maker to consult as many persons as possible in controversial aspects, in order to have the necessary arguments for a rational decision.

Incubation is the technique of clearing one’s mind when the creative resources have run out, in the hope that the helpful solution will occur along with the relaxation and mental reset.

Indicator lists refers to drawing up columns of key words and characteristics of the problem in question, and marking the relevant ones in terms of values, alternatives, uncertainty.

Decision tables are procedures of retaining ideas, orienting them towards a logical direction, and comparing situations. All versions will eventually be assessed in the light of the same values, by rational symmetry (e.g. prestigious and well paid work).

Decisions trees help classify explanations into categories (e.g. self, family, work, leisure, health, etc.).

Decomposition or breaking down is a technique of managing complex problems consisting in the separate analysis of sub-problems, solving them, and reuniting intermediary solutions to tackle the initial problem. Decomposition implies the existence of a permissive logical framework, several simultaneous ideas on the floor, and reaching an overall result.

Value lists are drawn up in terms of positive and negative autobiographical experiences, personalities carriers of values referred to, or by attaching to each value a quantifiable description (using comparable units of measurement).

“Plus and minus” tables express the relevance of values by certain criteria. The values can be marked with the symbols +, -, 0 and then quantified in order to define the beneficial, harmful, or neutral role of the alternatives imagined in order to make the decision.

Optimistic and pessimistic scenarios lead to projecting and comparing the extreme versions of the given situation, such as “at best” and “at worst”.

“Point zero” is a technique to evaluate alternatives (taken over from the addiction therapy) by referring to a neutral item in the current experience of the client. This point of reference is chosen from an inferior register, so that its visit gives pleasure, and once made aware it becomes a new element of neutrality and failure avoidance.

Sometimes we make choices on the spur of the moment (making use of an opportunity, getting away from a threat) and only then we seek arguments to support the respective choices in order to avoid self-denial and undermining of one’s own authority (professional or human). The same explanatory mechanism works if we are attached (if we feel or owe attachment) to a person. It is a case when we do not abandon someone we are loyal or statutory obliged to, even if we realize unfortunate decisions are at play. We thus become defenders of a decision we do not agree to, but which we take on and confer a new vigour by our own arguments. The free will must decide the margins of loyalty and the risks of personal sacrifice.

In critical situations, when actions are not consistent with ideas, decision makers have the tendency to reshape / align their ideas to actions and offer justification to the initial decision.

Target population

- Students about to choose the next stream of study (e.g. at the end of compulsory education).
- High school graduates (e.g. whether to pursue higher education or begin with the working life).
- People in a professional crisis (e.g. fired, gone bankrupt).
- People discouraged by their current situation (e.g. dissatisfied with their jobs, angry with their superiors, who cannot muster their strength to alleviate the situation).
- Parents who substitute themselves to their child as decision-makers, are aware of and displeased with this reality and sincerely wish to remedy it.
- People who have not made a significant progress in their professional life for some time, and despite their jobs being safe and socially comfortable, feel the need to move ahead or at least wish for novelty, even by engaging risk.
- Easily to influence, emotionally and/or psychologically unstable people (e.g. who have failed in previous decisions, who lay on the support of third parties, who are responsible for others in conflict situations).
- People who do not finalize what they have begun in their own interest (e.g. exaggerated altruism, low self-esteem).
- Employers having to decide for their employees (e.g. who to promote, how to tell someone that they have been let go).
- People in leadership positions of professional structures, who need to harmonize the needs of beneficiaries, the requests of partners, the expectations of funders, etc.
- People recently integrated in a professional group and do not wish to trigger astonishment or discontent on the part of their superiors (e.g. newly hired by fierce competition, people unsure of their ideas and constructive potential, people at the end of their careers).

There are not few the cases when not making a decision is preferable to a hurried / regrettable or mistaken decision. We might say that in any decision there are the germs of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which is why not unusual to regret the choice made right after expressing it, even if sure when making the choice; these are the doubters, the excessively analytical and self-critical, the displeased with their own condition and evolution, aspirants to an eternal “something else”. There are others who, once having made the decision, no longer perceive the advantages of any alternative, nor the

possibility of altering the initial decision; they are completely devoted to the idea they have reached (probably after considerable effort and without the initial hope of certainty), but not flexible enough to make changes on the way to see their idea fulfilled. Reverie and consistency are the positive aspects, while pathos and stubbornness are the flip-side.

To each situation in the typology above we can match various counselling interventions. One fact is however common and must be held in mind by counsellors: the client's interest and general welfare created by accepting the good results and by a critical understanding of momentary dissatisfactions. Clients must move on with a clear image of what needs to be done from then on and with an improved self-perception.

Examples, case studies¹¹, exercises

A couple (he a student, she already working) seek counselling for the following problem:

*“He (X) is about to graduate from the medical school and must decide on residency specialization. His choice wavers between **emergency medicine (E M)** and **obstetrics-gynaecology (O-G)**, leaning towards the second. He is undecided but nevertheless certain to succeed with the residential exam in either specialty.*

The counsellor asks what attracts X in obstetrics-gynaecology and finds out he enjoys the work itself. The counsellor derives that for the other specialty X would need to find another residency vacancy. What does he like in the emergency medicine? The 50-hour workload compared to the 80 hours in obstetrics-gynaecology; this would allow him to spend more time with his family. Neither client admits other values involved in the decision.

The counsellor invites the clients to draw a diagram of the decision:

	Residency	Nature of work	Workload
E M	0	0	+
O-G	+	+	0

In the decision table above, the line E M is the option for a career in emergency medicine, and O-G represents the option for obstetrics-gynaecology. The first column is the quality of the experience anticipated as a resident in each specialty, the second is the quality of the work experience anticipated; the third column is the weekly engagement anticipated at work. The pluses are good results and the zeros are acceptable results. A significant factor for the importance of the decision is the duration of the impact. After a residency of 3-4 years, a 40-year career is expected. The counsellor that the nature of work and the workload are 10 times more important than the residency period, since they are features lasting ten times longer.

¹¹ Taken over from Anderson (2002).

X admits that from this perspective the residency is no longer important, and suggests eliminating it altogether.

The counsellor redraws the diagram with the new data and gets confirmation from clients:

	<i>Nature of work</i>	<i>Workload</i>
<i>E M</i>	0	+
<i>O-G</i>	+	0

The counsellor proposes a comparative analysis of the two criteria. The impact the nature of work has on X will last for 40 years, but X's relationship with his children – whatever its nature – will last for his whole life.

As regards the annual impact of the two criteria, the clients reason together that the weekly workload is much more important, since children are the core factor in this decision, and the extra-time dedicated to the job would affect the family life of all concerned for the rest of their lives. The clients see clearly that the emergency medicine is the right choice for them. They understand that they judged the importance of the decision from their point of view leaving out the essential though abstract referent, the children. The counsellor appreciates their sensitivity in perceiving the difficulty of the choice and their determination to seek professional help."

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- decisions about to be taken on the basis of insufficient or incomplete information stimulate the person's sensitivity to social events, increase their degree of attractiveness, challenge, and interest on the part of the person;
- decision makers (especially in the implementation phase) take on full responsibility, whatever the initiators or supporters. Decisions are personal experiences and the consequences are principally due to people who make them;
- decision making reduces the threshold of tolerance to error or compromise. Those who act against their decision for good reasons become more flexible and inclined to a broader understanding of things;
- one can consult with others in order to decide (e.g. friends for personal decisions, family for financial decisions, a counsellor for professional issues, or many other combinations possible);
- decision making creates diverse opportunities to express and strengthen personal values in concrete situations. The choice characterizes our identity and style of solving our life problems.

Disadvantages:

- a decision is agreed upon – individually or with others – but it is not necessarily implemented. A counsellor, if requested, can at most signal and assess the fulfilment of decisions made;
- decisions are not always capable of replacing contrary habits;
- emotions have variable weight in decision making and can overcome the rational evidence;
- confidence in one's own decisions may be mistaken with decision-making competence in any situation;
- there is no guaranteed success if one follows / copies a certain decision-making model or the good practice of others;
- the irrevocable character of some decisions, except of the tentative ones;
- the unique character or alternatives, values, possible future, hesitation and unilateral concentration, which can affect the fair judgement of the decision maker;
- the illusion of being in control in irrational, random, or poorly standardized situations;
- the preference for easy decisions that are momentarily beneficial, however not grounded individually, but in an opinion current or group pressure (e.g. enrolling in university under the pressure of family members or classmates);
- decision making in a life sector by ignoring connections with other sectors (e.g. accepting the proposal to work in another city for a better salary and ignoring the possible negative effects on one's family life);
- the limits of normative models were formulated by Ertelt and Schulz (2002) as follows: the normative models do not explain the decision making process, ignore the clients' ability to take over and process information, elude blocking strategies, conflicts, emotions resulting from information overload, the impact of coincidence. Nevertheless, we consider that the normative models circumscribe a theoretical and aspiration frame of reference for the counselling process in general;
- Ertelt and Schulz (2002) critically and globally analyse the category of descriptive-heuristic theories, stressing the following aspects: it is assumed that people use methods to simplify the real situations, solve problems step by step through trial and error, take into consideration only a few alternatives and only apply certain assessment criteria at a given time, and keep their decisions open in order to integrate new information.

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Career Planning and Development

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History

One of the numerous definitions of career development was given by Gysbers and Moore (1974): “*self-development throughout one’s lifetime by interaction and integration of roles, contexts, and events lived.*” Career was related to the **roles** people perform (family member, community member, worker), the **contexts** in which they find themselves (home, school, community, workplace), and **events** planned or not, that occur in their lives (employment, marriage, parenthood). To this definition we can add other factors that are specific to the workplace and can influence career development: gender, ethnicity, religion, social background (Gysbers; Hughey; Starr; Lapan, 1992).

Career development is seen as a means of satisfying both the requirements of employees and organization; contrary to older strategies that would only respond to institutional needs. The objective of career development is therefore professionalisation of individuals and assuring their personal welfare, as well as the prosperity of the organizations they work for.

Theoretical background

The notion of *career* involves, aside from roles a person fulfils throughout the active life, a collection of activities. Attention must be paid to one’s career, since it is an essential means of self-expression in the world.

Career planning is “a continual self-assessment and objective setting process (Hudson, 1999). In a more general framework, career planning involves a rational process by which a person sets a series of goals for career development, identifying as well the means for their fulfilment.

Career development is the result of implementing good career planning, as a consequence of which one has achieved appropriate competence and experience for the position.

Careers are also seen as a development process in stages which unfolds throughout one's lifetime. Ginzberg's theory (1951) on career planning and development is based on three postulates:

a. *Choosing an occupation is a process lasting from the first 4-5 years of life until late maturity. Three stages are identifiable in the process:*

- *The fantasy period* (6-11 years): children believe they can become anything, professionally; the period is characterised by lack of anticipation of the medium- and long-term consequences of such a choice, and ignorance of the necessary professional qualifications for the respective profession / occupation.
- *The tentative period* (11-17 years): a series of stages: uncertainty, exploring and conscious self-analysis:
 - *The interests stage* (11-12 years): children become aware that they will have to make a choice regarding their future profession (they base their choices on their parents' occupations or new subject matters studied at school).
 - *The ability stage* (13-15 years): pupils focus on those professions related to the subject matters they do best at (based on feedback from teachers or parents).
 - *The value stage* (15-16 years): adolescents make the connection between their abilities and the satisfaction they might derive from a profession.
 - *The transition stage* (16-17 years): what becomes important is establishing a direct relation between personal interests and achievements so far.
- *The period of realistic choice* (17-22 years), including:
 - *Exploration* (17-20 years): individuals gather information on the physical and mental requirements of certain professions.
 - *Crystallization* (20-22 years): people are in possession of sufficient information for choosing a career.
 - *Specification* – choice of profession.

These development periods are not rigid within the mentioned time limits. Some young people may early get a clear idea about what they wish to do, while others are long undecided or frequently change their options.

b. The process is irreversible

The longer the training for a certain career, the more difficult it will be to change it. This is why it is important for young people to be informed as early as possible on the options related to their potential, intellectual and practical capacities.

c. Compromise is essential to every choice

People seeking a profession are often faced with choices: between what they like and what is useful / necessary / desirable for them to choose, between personal interests and aptitudes, between their parents' and their own wishes, between their dreams and what school and the labour market offer. Opting for each of these situations presupposes reasonable renunciation and compromise.

Super (1953) also put forth a theory regarding the emergence and evolution of the process oriented towards choosing a profession. He identifies the following stages:

- *The growth stage* (4-10 years): one starts being concerned with the future, has increased control over his/her own life, is convinced that good results must be obtained at school and work, acquiring attitudes and skills based on competences.
- *The exploration stage* (14-24 years): improved understanding of the environment and one's self (crystallization of identity), limiting the options range (specifying choice).
- *The stabilization stage* (24-44 years): employment, strengthening one's position, promotion.
- *The maintenance stage* (45-65 years): interest in a satisfactory performance, introducing change and innovation to avoid routine.
- *Ceasing employment* (after 65 years): retirement, restructuring of one's lifestyle.

Super's theory is also based on the following postulates:

- Individual differences in abilities, interests, and personality must be considered.
- In each of us there is a multi-potential that allows qualification for several professions or occupations. They may be identified using an inventory of interests and aptitudes.
- Professional preferences and competences change over time, which makes career choice a continual process.

- Work is a lifestyle. Adequate adjustment of profession and personal life is desirable.

Career planning and development is closely related to *family life*; between the two aspects several relationships are possible (Zedeck; Mosier, 1990, apud Gysbers, 2003):

- *total merge* – there is a very close connection between work and family, so that satisfactions and dissatisfactions in one have their effect on the other;
- *compensation* – the relationship between work and family is reciprocal: one can compensate the other;
- *segmentation* – work and family may co-exist without mutual influence;
- *instrumentality* – one role is used to get something from the other role;
- *conflict* – success in one role involves sacrificing the other.

Career planning process in an organization holds three possible routes of career development, which vary function of the organization size and the activity categories therein:

- a. *the traditional route*: the employees are promoted vertically, from the bottom to the top, on a preset line of positions (continual promotion in time);
- b. *the network route*: when various positions require similar capacities, forming families of jobs; the employees move in alternation vertically and horizontally, function of the work activities and necessary abilities;
- c. *the dual route*: when employees contribute with their abilities to certain activities without swerving from their previous route.

Since present-day society passes through a phase of significant restructuring, particular attention must be paid to career development, which involves quick adaptation on the part of the workforce. Here are the changes expected to occur:

- as globalisation continues, some employees become redundant;
- more and more jobs created in the service sector;
- flexibility, creativity, adaptability and continuing training count more than the experience in years;
- job security no longer available in many sectors;
- employees asked for flexibility, adaptation, innovation (and not necessarily for work speed and low production costs);
- outsourcing of production (companies only do what they do best, all the rest provided by outside companies);

- temporary jobs become more valuable;
- for the majority of people the family and the organization they work for become central institutions in their lives.

Method presentation

Career planning and development¹² is not a linear process, but a repetitive and continuing one, involving understanding the labour market as a whole, evaluating personal strengths and weaknesses, articulating one's own vision of career, drawing up a realistic plan for the future and making use of one's worth in order to reach the proposed professional aims (Donner, 1998).

In career planning several information sources are required, to guide the person:

- *Self-assessment*: people must consider all their aspirations as human beings, in correlation with their aptitudes, knowledge and development potential through continuous learning. In addition, they must evaluate the characteristics of the environment they live / work in. Self-assessment presupposes knowledge of: aptitudes, interests, and values.
- *Turning to experts / counsellors*: seeking the experience and advice of people whose professional stature enables them to offer suggestions.
- Taking the development *opportunities* by enrolling in training programmes, setting new personal goals.

After analysing one's personality profile it is also important to reflect on academic aspects such as: titles, background, master degrees, languages, etc., which should be part of the personal portfolio. At the end of the analysis a SWOT matrix will be drawn up in order to oppose strengths (resources and opportunities) to weaknesses (flaws and threats). The reasoning is: what strengths can the person rely on, considering the opportunities on the labour market, and what are the weaknesses to be worked on considering the current threats?

The starting point for a good career planning is *self-knowledge*: that is proper awareness of one's personality features. Puchol (1994) recommends using basic questions to reveal self-knowledge:

¹² Career planning and development involves turning to a series of related or independent methods. Some of these are presented as independent instruments in the Compendium.

<i>Who am I / What can I do?</i>	<i>Assessment of personality and skills / aptitudes</i>
<i>What do I want to be?</i>	<i>Assessment of personal interests / motivations / aspirations</i>
<i>What do I have to do?</i>	<i>Assessment of personal needs / investments in education, training, and work</i>

The honest consideration of these questions allows one to focus on a certain path and follow a certain line of professional training. Therefore, career planning is a rational process that involves answering questions such mentioned:

- *Who am I? What can I do?*
 - Identifying aptitudes:
 - Drawing up a list of 20 achievements, big or small, professional, personal, academic, emotional, etc.
 - Defining the capacities behind the objectives: intelligence, perseverance, motivation, empathy, etc.
 - Identifying weaknesses:
 - Establishing the moments when things did not go well, and the factors that caused failure.
- *What do I want to be?*
 - To what can I direct the efforts and skills I have developed?
- *What motivates me?*
 - Security – staying with the organization for a long time.
 - Freedom– autonomy and my own space.
 - Results – leaving something well done behind.
 - Balance – giving equal time to career and family.
 - Money – high income.
- *What must I do? How will I get there?*
 - Developing current and latent abilities.
 - Continuing learning.
 - Avoiding long pauses and inactive moments at work, etc.

Thus, any person must also ask himself/herself a series of questions related to:

- Their values:
 - What is important to me (in my personal and worklife)?
 - What are my priorities: family, myself, community, work, etc.?

- Their interests:
 - What did I enjoy in my previous jobs and what do I like in my current job?
 - In what type of environment I perform best?
 - What truly motivates me?

In analysing one's capacities and wishes it is necessary to confront these images with the facts of reality, through a series of other questions:

- What observations and comments related to my achievements so far have I received from colleagues, friends, family?
- What are the strengths and limits they identified in me?
- What similarities and differences are between my assessment and theirs?

The next step is drawing up a career plan taking into account the requirements of employers on the labour market, the competences they seek most when hiring, and one's resources and abilities.

A relatively similar approach is to be found at Gysbers, Hughey, Starr and Lapan (1992), who consider that a strategic professional plan must include the following stages:

- *Setting aims.* This is how one can keep focus on future actions, on the desire to do everything at best. Professional aims must be realistic (realizable) and interesting.
- *Specifying action steps.* Once the objectives set, they must be converted into concrete action steps and distinct activities. These steps involve the answer to the question: "What must I do to attain this aim?"
- *Identifying resources.* The planning process and reaching the objectives also involve answers to the questions "who" and "with what".
- *Timing.* Concrete and rigorous planning favours the efficiency of career planning and implementation. Setting deadlines must not cause fear, but stimulate.
- *Identifying the success indicators.* Ever since conceiving the career plan we must ask ourselves what does success represent for us and how we will know that our plan is working. The indicators to measure performance may be intrinsic or extrinsic.

For an effective professional development three stages should be completed (Sanchez, 1994):

- 1) *The orientation stage* – involves identifying the career type one wishes and the steps required in order to attain one's objectives; this stage requires individualized professional guidance and various sources of information.
- 2) *The development stage* – consists of actions performed to create and develop the necessary qualities for potential hiring; mentoring programmes, job rotation, training, etc. can do this.
- 3) *The assessment stage* – involves activities related to self-assessment and assessment by others; the aim of the stage is to identify strengths and weaknesses of the person.

Career planning is not a priority only for the individual, but also for organizations. Winterscheid (1980) formulates the main objectives of career planning in an organization:

- Satisfying qualitative needs in terms of human resources, current and future.
- Establishing efficient internal communication regarding the future professional trajectories of employees.
- Maximizing the efficiency of current human resource programmes, integrating continuing training and career management.

Career plans must be dynamic, adapted to personal circumstances and professionally stimulating. Each person must be willing to adapt their plan when other variables intervene in the larger context or when a new development stage is reached.

Target population

When we speak of career planning and development, we have in mind a very broad category of potential beneficiaries, from people yet in school to people at the end of their active life:

- *Pupils* about to go to university must know what they are capable of doing and what the workforce offers / demands.
- *University* graduates must analyse their abilities and information very well in order to decide on the next step in their lives (master's degree, PhD, specialization, employment right away).
- *Young people and adults* who wish to analyse their professional profile and build a strategy to develop their competences and fulfil their aspirations.

- *Adults* in diverse stages of personal development who wish to reorient their career.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Exercise 1

Interpreting aptitudes

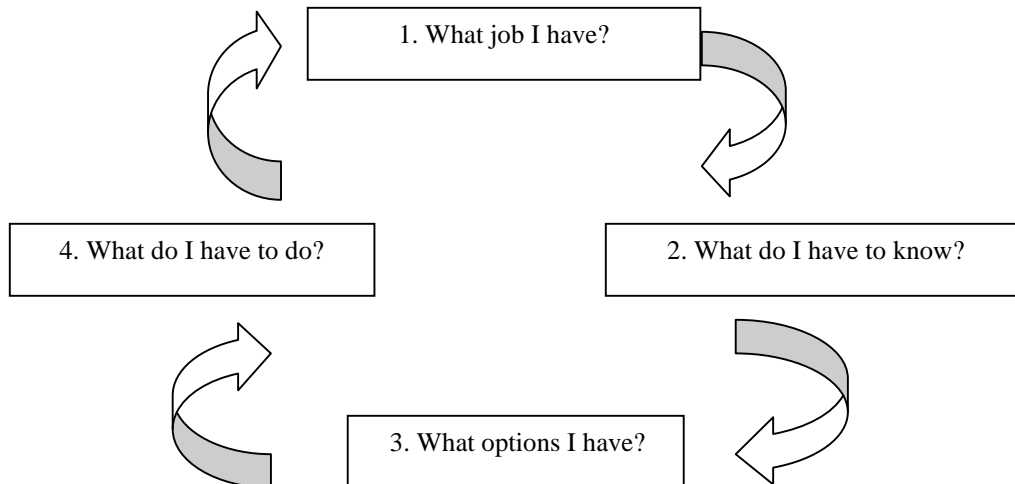
Below, a checklist used in identifying the skills of a candidate so as to draw up a career plan:

APTITUDES	Current	Required	Absent
1. Verbal aptitudes			
2. Arithmetical / mathematical aptitudes			
3. Spatial aptitudes			
4. Physical aptitudes (force, speed, etc.)			
5. Relating / communication aptitudes			
6. Manual aptitudes			

Further, the aptitudes are placed by hierarchy and strengths and weaknesses identified.

Exercise 2

Four steps to a new career



1. *What job I have? What do I do now?* The client's options: becomes aware of circumstances, looks around, analyses.
 - What do I do now?
 - What have I been doing?
 - What would I like to do?
 - What I do not like to do?
2. *What do I have to do? What can I do? What does the market offer?* The client's options: thinks about what he/she wants, needs, and can do; then get informed on what he/she could actually do as the labour market currently stands.
 - What can I do (aptitudes, competences, skills, abilities)?
 - What occupation types are available to me?
3. *What options or alternative I have?* The client's options: analyse each possibility, choose the one that fits best.
 - How can I find out more about the occupations I am interested in?
 - What occupation will I choose?
4. *What do I have to do?* The client's options: plan the way to implement the decision and act according to the plan.
 - What do I have to do in the chosen profession / occupation / work?
 - Where am I now in relation to the end?
 - How do I make an action plan?

Case study (four steps)

Mihai used to take summer jobs in constructions, and in the winter he would retire into the woods. Ever since a boy, his grandfather had been taking him into the woods with him and teaching him how to survive. Mihai did not have to work during the winter. He made enough money during the summer to last him all year. He was not rich but lacked nothing.

One summer Mihai had an accident at work. The doctors told him he could no longer work in constructions again, which meant finding another income source. He then **paused and considered** the alternatives he had. Talking to a counsellor from the employment agency, Mihai mentioned his pleasure of walking in the woods. He was then recommended to a forester course that allowed him to find employment. Somebody suggested he could be a guide for equestrian mountain tourism, but he stayed with the first option.

Initially Mihai was stressed by having to go back to school, spend time at a desk, etc. but he **inquired and found out** the training programme would last less than 9 months. Consequently he **chose** to enrol. And he **planned to** begin in the autumn. On receiving permission from the doctor, Mihai begun the work in his new job.

The four steps

1. *What I do now?* – Mihai used to work in constructions, but after his accident he stopped and contemplated his life at the moment. He thought of what he was interested in and realized he truly liked being in the woods.
2. *What do I have to know?* – Mihai found out from authorized sources about the existence of a programme for training forest rangers.
3. *What alternatives I have?* – Mihai analysed the opportunity of starting the training. He finally decided for it.
4. *What do I have to do?* – Mihai planned starting the course in the respective autumn and followed his plan.

Exercise 3

The exercise below aims to identify a series of characteristics, based on which any person can guide his/her career.

- *Attitudes* are elements conditioned by behaviour (innate and acquired) through which the behaviour adapts to the environment.
- *Aptitudes* are predispositions allowing carrying on with good results physical or mental activities. These are mainly innate, however can be developed or become poor, function of the stimuli in the daily life environment.

At the end, the person can identify his/her *strengths* and *weaknesses*, what can be developed or is already high. The tables below help identify these characteristics:

Attitudes			
Questions	Yes	No	Don't know
I prefer to follow clear objectives when I work			
I pay more attention to my work than to my family			
I feel I am making an ethical and moral compromise with certain ideas or people			
I am more attracted by the salary than by the work itself			
Ideas condition my opinions about others and the way I relate to them			
In my work I need to be appreciated by my boss or colleagues			
I cherish security and stability at work more than anything			
I consider mobility and change to be stimulating			
I accept individual tasks			
I like having power of decision in my work			
I am enthusiastic about what I do			
I like taking on responsibilities			
I do not like working by myself			

Aptitudes

Questions	Good	Average	Poor
Text understanding			
Writing			
Oral presentation			
Problem identification			
New approaches to problems			
Investigation / research			
Leadership			
Teamwork			
Persuasion			
Sales			
Activity planning			
Efficient time organization			
Individual work			
Long term projects			
Work with details			
Mathematical aptitudes			

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- early identification of personal capacities in view of career orientation;
- periodic verification of the dynamics in aptitudes and capacities throughout one's career, and discovering the areas to be developed;
- organization of a professional pathway in view of continuing self-development.

Disadvantages:

- rigid persons cannot adapt to a career plan once established;
- unless periodically re-assessed, people may continue on a professional pathway that no longer suits them (losing some capacities, acquiring new ones, changes in the requirements of the labour market).

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Curricular Area Counselling and Guidance

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History

Concerns for identification of *guidance education* methods have existed ever since guidance services have been formally established with specialized staff, and systematic reflection in the field of counselling and guidance. Current practice highlights *the educational approach to Counselling and guidance*, which appeared in the context of extending the age limit for compulsory education in Romania, diversifying secondary education, and postponing the deadline for professional option. This concept lays stress on systematic education, throughout one's study life, by providing information on educational and vocational opportunities, facilitating self-knowledge, and engaging young people in career exploration and choice.

Watts and Sultana (2004), in a comparative study of European career counselling systems, refer to the contemporary tendency of paying increased attention to guidance and career education in schools. Activities of *career education and counselling* are included in the curriculum of many countries. These may be distinct subject matters or under a more comprehensive and compatible subject matter. *Counselling and guidance* programmes are being enriched by the active involvement of employers in various professions and jobs, parents, representatives of the local community, etc. Pupils are supported in organizing and planning their own long-term learning activities, by creating portfolios, elaborating personal and professional projects, etc.

Counselling and guidance activities are carried out in schools, with greater depth and frequency in times before important decisions, but there is a tendency to carry out such

activities as early as possible. Internationally, *educational guidance* starts in the primary school, through activities of assessment and information, extending over the entire compulsory school period. For example, in Canada the approach called *l'école orientante*, *the guidance-oriented school*, initiated in Quebec is associated with certain educational reforms based on competence development. If in general education the main objective is supporting pupils in outlining their personal identity, in secondary school they are ready to choose a profession. To this end, resources are allotted to increase the number of specialists in the field of guidance and counselling, and in addition collaboration between teachers and school counsellors, partnerships with parents and representatives of the local community are encouraged.

Theoretical background

Law (1996) proposes a comparative analysis of **career education** and **career guidance** activities.

Criteria	Career education	Career guidance
<i>Contact</i>	Activities are carried out in groups, and specific group interactions are favoured	Activities take place individually or in small groups, benefiting from human interactions
<i>Relevance</i>	Stress is laid on learning in general, relevant for the group	Stress is on the role of differentiated learning, important for individual
<i>Fundaments</i>	Teaching programme is prepared in advance	The client negotiates the programme with the counsellor
<i>Development</i>	Learning is progressive, from fundamental competences to advanced	Learning is based on experience, starting from what the client needs to do now
<i>Results</i>	Developing a general framework for learning, open to including and supporting individual answers	Preparing a person to face specific problems or present decisions

Law pleads for organized, systematic, and rigorous activities of career education and counselling that motivate subjects to become involved actively, put their potential to use, and prepare them for lifelong learning.

Introducing elements of counselling in the curriculum represents an important argument for the development of information, counselling and guidance services in schools. The contents of the programmes differ by country, but they include a series of fundamental aspects, according to the DOTS model of Law and Watts (1977):

- becoming aware of possibilities: opportunities, requirements, interest for client, advantages offered;

- self-knowledge: capacities, aptitudes, skills, needs, values, and interests;
- decision-making: learning the means of making a realistic decision;
- developing the capacity of facing changes by applying decisions and accepting their consequences.

In what follows we present an overview of the situation in several European countries.

- In **Denmark**, pupils aged 14-16 in *folkeskole* benefit from at least 48 classes to choose an educational and professional path (*education des choix*), with the support of the teacher counsellor.
- In **Germany**, there are *Arbeitslehre*, orientation programmes about work for 5-7 hours per week for pupils aged 13-15 in *Hauptschulen* and *Realschulen*. The curriculum insists on the world of work, structured either as a separate subject matter or as an interdisciplinary or integrated programme.
- In **Greece**, pupils aged 12-14 participate in 45 classes for choice education, and pupils in the first years of high school (15-16 years old) benefit from 30 such classes.
- Guidance activities are carried out separately or are included in a compulsory subject matter for pupils aged 12-15 in **the Netherlands**.
- In **Portugal**, pupils aged 14-15 take part weekly in a career counselling session lasting for 50 minutes.
- Guidance education represents one of the transversal subject matters included in the curriculum for pupils of 14-16 years in **Great Britain**. In many schools it is part of *personal and social education* (PSE).
- Programmes meant to prepare pupils for the professional life are also present in **Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg**.
- In **Belgium**, counselling in psycho-medical-social centres (PMS) carry out group activities on choice education with pupils, and in **France** similar sessions are organized by counsellors-psychologists in information and guidance centres (CIO).
- In **Luxemburg**, career counselling in high schools is linked to ample school reforms and the enhancement of cooperation between school and community. Guidance education targets: support in the transition from primary to secondary school, developing the competences of *savoir être* and social aptitudes, by using group learning methods and counselling. Thus, the teachers and the school psychologist give support to pupils in making decisions and improving their personal management.

A report of the European Commission (Watts, 1994) identifies some difficulties in carrying out school and professional choice education activities, regarding the role of the teacher (who must be animator and coordinator of a dynamic learning process) and no grading. It is recommended to prepare thoroughly, similarly to counsellor teachers, in order to carry out more efficient activities.

In *Counselling and guidance in Romania* the following approaches are promoted:

- *the autonomous model*, considering *counselling and guidance* independent processes, exterior to the educational system (especially applied to the field of work for adult counselling);
- *the dynamic model*, including *counselling and guidance* in the school curriculum (especially applied to counselling young people in initial education and training).

Thus, *Counselling and guidance* activities carried out in specialized institutions such as: Centres and Offices of Psycho-pedagogical Assistance in pre-university education, or Centres of Information and Counselling in higher education complete each other and co-exist with activities specific for the curricular area *Counselling and guidance* (2005).

The approach *Activating vocational and personal development (ADVP)* represents the theoretical base for a series of *models and methods for guidance education*, currently used in **France**. They are called *Education of choice (Education des choix)* and *Path to Doing (Chemin faisant)*, and will be presented below. ADVP was created in the 1970 by a group of Canadian academics: Pelletier, Noiseux, Bujold, based on the ideas of Super – development psychology, Guilford – cognitive psychology, and Rogers – humanist psychology.

The arguments for ADVP are (Guichard, Huteau, 2001):

- the phenomenon of professional mobility, that is the disappearance of some trades and the appearance of others, the changes in the nature and conditions of numerous professional activities;
- the differences between the existing aptitudes and assessed by means of psychological tests, and those required by certain professions;
- replacing the image of the passive and reactive subject, in the psycho-technical theory by the active and autonomous subject, promoted by the cognitive psychology (Piaget) and humanist psychology (Rogers);
- changing the school context, by extending the number of years in compulsory education, and the emergence of the need to prepare from early on the decisions regarding the study or professions;

- the evolution of the values promoted in society, which places on the spot autonomy and personal development.

Activating vocational and personal development makes recourse to the experiences of the subject, approached from a cognitive point of view (the heuristic principle) and phenomenological (the experiential principle). According to ADVP, subjects go through a series of stages in their development, each associated with a cognitive process, according to *the model of the intellect* by Guilford:

- “*exploration*” presupposes the examination of existing possibilities and the active search for varied information on the self and the world, process based on *divergent thinking*;
- “*crystallization*” is done by ordering and structuring the information acquired in the previous stage, process based on *conceptual thinking*;
- “*specification*” is similar to decision and is performed by making the right decision for the beneficiary, process that needs *evaluative thinking*;
- “*realization*” means making the decision concrete, moving on to action, process associated with *involving thinking*.

Method presentation

Curricular area counselling and guidance was included in the National Curriculum in Romania in the school year 1998-1999, creating thus a systematic framework for individual and group counselling and guidance activities¹³.

The Romanian Ministry of Education provisioned then for the following aspects:

“... curricular area counselling and guidance represents an organized meeting between pupils and counsellor teachers authorized by the school administration board.”

The contents of the curricular area included:

- a. counselling in efficient learning techniques;
- b. school counselling and guidance;
- c. counselling for pupils behind with their studies;

¹³ In fact, the full implementation of the Counselling and guidance curriculum – in especially designed classes at all levels: general, secondary, high school and vocational school – started in 2006, after an ample training stage at national level of all teachers current and candidates to the status of class master, called counsellor teachers.

- d. counselling and guidance for proficient pupils;
- e. counselling in personal matters;
- f. counselling for teachers related to teaching / learning methodology.

Between 2003-2006 a team made up of researchers and practitioners in the field drew up and continually improved the *Counselling and guidance* curricula for:

- 1 to 4th grade
- 5th to 8th grade
- 9th and 10th grade
- 11th and 12th grade
- vocational schools, 9th and 10th grade
- vocational schools, 11th grade, completion grade
- technological high schools, grades 11th and 12th

The new curricula are focused on a model associating competence and contents, contributing to the development of key competences set at the European level (Barcelona, 2002) and especially the following aspects:

- Interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic competences.
- “Learning to learn”.
- Entrepreneurial culture.
- Information and communication technology (ICT).

The *Counselling and guidance* curriculum includes the following **thematic modules**, found in each year of study of the three cycles: primary, secondary, and high school:

- **Self-knowledge and personal development**
- **Communication and social skills**
- **Information and learning management**
- **Career planning**
- **Lifestyle quality**

The structure of the current curriculum for *primary and secondary school* includes the following components:

- **Framework objectives** (goals to be reached at the end of each curricular cycle).
- **Values and attitudes** (developed through the *Counselling and guidance* curriculum throughout schooling).
- **Reference objectives** (derived from the framework objectives and specific for each year of study).
- Examples of **learning activities** (activities meant to support the attainment of reference objectives).
- **Contents** (elaborated in accordance with the needs and specificity of individual pupils and the class, and including the topics to support the attainment of reference objectives).
- **Methodological suggestions** (examples of methods and techniques proposed to achieve contents and reach objectives; they include global and flexible recommendations regarding methods and techniques characteristic for each educational and training stage, without being compulsory).
- **Bibliography and resources** (publications, websites, institutions to be consulted by counsellors and teachers for further information).

The curriculum for *primary school* considers the changes occurred in the structure of the Romanian educational system, respecting the requirements regarding the start of compulsory education at the age of 6. *Counselling and guidance* is only optionally taught in primary school, with 0-1 classes per week, according to minister's order no. 4686 of 2003 regarding the approval of the educational framework and curricula for 1st and 2nd grade. Thus, teachers can plan *Counselling and guidance* activities in each of the four school years or only in certain years of the primary cycle, function of the needs and specificity of the class.

The educational framework plan approved by minister's order no. 3638 of 2001 stipulates that in *the gymnasium (lower secondary) cycle* *Counselling and guidance* is compulsory with 1 class per week. In addition, teachers may hold an optional course of *Counselling and guidance* (0-1 classes per week if the school should so decide). The structure of the current curriculum places the fundamentals of the compulsory *Counselling and guidance* activities in secondary school, but suggestions are also offered for the optional classes, according to the needs and requirements of the class.

In case of the curriculum for *high school (secondary education)* we notice the following elements:

- **General competences** (structured ensembles of knowledge and skills that are developed throughout high school).
- **Values and attitudes** (developed throughout schooling).
- **Specific competences** (derived from general and to be developed and related to the content units for each year of study).
- **Contents** (elaborated in accordance with the needs and specificity of individual pupils and the class, and including topics through which specific competences are developed).
- **Methodological suggestions** (global and flexible recommendations regarding methods and techniques specific for each year of study).

The curriculum for *the 9th and 10th grade* incorporates and respects the provisions of extending the compulsory education in Romania to 10 years, and the separate status of these two years of study that belong at the same time to compulsory education and high school or vocational education. In addition, the *Counselling and guidance* curriculum for *the 11th and 12th grade* takes into consideration the status of these grades as part of the post-compulsory education, and as transition towards university or social and professional life.

The curriculum for *vocational information and counselling for the 9th and 10th grade in vocational school* respects the changes in the pre-university education: on the one hand the extending of compulsory education to 10 years, and on the other the particular status of the 9th and 10th grade in vocational schools, on the graduation of which pupils may opt for further vocational school years (levels 2 and 3) or high school education. These conditions offer common and specific elements of vocational school as opposed to high school and technological school.

The structure of the curriculum for **vocational school 9th and 10th grades**, for *vocational guidance and counselling 11th grade in vocational school (completion year)* and for **11th and 12th grade in technological high school**, includes the same elements:

- **“competence unit:** a coherent and explicit set of competences describing the things pupils must know, understand, or be capable of doing at the end of the educational and vocational training, level 1;
- **individual competences:** subcomponents of competence units materialized in measurable results at the personal level. Individual competences respect the established applicability conditions and are developed through specific thematic contents;

- **application and assessment conditions:** require participative teaching strategies, centred on pupils and on what they must be able to do at the end of each school year. Within the competence unit, the continuing assessment instruments proposed are related to performance criteria and assessment tests;
- **methodological suggestions:** correlations between competence and contents, examples of methods and techniques to achieve contents and develop competences, as well as using assessment instruments” (according to the National Framework of Credits and Qualifications).

Individual competences to be developed in **vocational school, 9th and 10th grade**, have in view:

- personal characteristics involved in attaining professional performance;
- efficient learning skills;
- options regarding the personal educational and professional training trajectory;
- the world of professions.

Through the specific *vocational guidance and counselling* activities in **11th grade in vocational school (completion year)** what is aimed is the level of knowledge, development and maturity attained by pupils at the end of the 10th grade in vocational school, and also the necessity of completing knowledge and developing competences, contributing to the good integration of the graduates in high school. Individual competences are structured on the basis of:

- personal characteristics and factors involved in career development;
- options regarding the personal educational and professional training trajectory.

The curriculum for *vocational information and counselling in technological high schools, 11th and 12th grade*, holds important that these classes include graduates of the technological stream of study (10th grade) and vocational (completion year). This curriculum contributes to successfully following the competence unit “personal development in view of performance – level 3.” Individual competences focus on:

- personal resource management;
- elaborating projects of continuing training;
- entrepreneurial competences;
- capitalizing on personal experience in career development.

We mention a series of **guidance education methods** used in **France**: *Education of choice (Education des choix)* and *Path to Doing (Chemin faisant)* (Boy, 1999, apud Guichard; Huteau, 2001). The main ideas promoted by these methods are:

- The educational approach places the subject at the centre of experience, guidance and development;
- People delve into personal motivations, live unifying experiences that are structured in self-perception, then self-concept, and ultimately self-identity;
- The educational and experiential approach engages pupils in an active process of personal development and project development, which will change their perspective on the social and economic environment.

The method *education of choice* lays stress on counselling young people in the process of adaptation to the conditions of the contemporary society, getting control over their lives, and identifying solutions to the problems they face; this way they are supported in *learning to guide themselves*.

Education for choice is addressed to secondary school pupils and aims to (Pellerano, 1988, apud Guichard; Huteau, 2001):

- prepare pupils for career choice;
- develop the beneficiaries' capacity to guide themselves throughout school, personal and professional life;
- develop motivation to learn and facilitate school success;
- involve parents as partners in education.

Each *pupil* has a notebook that includes: exercises, space to write down results of personal investigations, and explanations of fundamental notions. The notebook is presented to *parents* in a letter that sits on its front page. *Teachers / counsellors* have handbooks for each year of study. They include: method presentation, objectives of each session, and precise work indications. In addition, pupils and counsellors use an index of professions, containing the description through activities and aptitudes of over 600 professions, jobs, and occupations.

Annual curricula are structured on the basis of the ADVP sequence, and include between 3-5 thematic modules, each with 2-4 sessions of 55 minutes each. We illustrate with the modules for the 8th grade:

- I. *Influences, beliefs, and representations*
- II. *Learning to get informed*
- III. *Values and self- knowledge*
- IV. *Decisions and strategies*

Activities are carried out with the entire class and in small groups. Each session includes the stages: remembering the preceding topic, doing an exercise ("experience", in the language of ADVP) and valorising it ("exploitation"), and then a synthesis of the meeting ("assessment"). The counsellor teacher's role is to support pupils in expressing and analysing their personal opinions, and challenging them to confront their points of view

with those of their parents, colleagues, and teachers. At the end of the meeting, pupils are invited to draw up 1-2 pages in which to give an account of what they have discovered, learned, felt.

The method *Chemin faisant* (Mouilllet; Morel, 1997, apud Guichard; Huteau, 2001) targets young people who have finished their studies and are looking for a job, and adults in professional re-conversion / re-integration. The guidance process goes through all specific phases, from identification of the problem to applying the strategy for fulfilling the personal and professional project.

The method includes the following *stages*, each associated to an objective:

- presentation (3 sequences) refers to preparation of the meeting;
- setting the goal and means (4 sequences): clarifying the situation of the beneficiary, making him or her understand the method and mode of work;
- personal and professional overview (11 sequences): identifying preferences, interests, values, personality traits, competences, as well as unravelling the work conditions in certain occupations / jobs;
- choosing an occupation (4 sequences): identifying the occupation depends on the results of the competence screening;
- validation of the decision (6 sequences): confronting wishes and representations of the subject with the world of work in view of making a decision;
- action plan and obstacles to be removed (5 sequence): planning the necessary stages to fulfil the project, anticipating the difficulties and defining the strategies to overcome them.

The meetings are held individually and in-group, and the beneficiaries are encouraged to express and confront their points of view in order to know themselves and the world they live in.

Another example of curriculum is *the comprehensive counselling and guidance programme* for schools in Michigan, USA (1992). It includes a series of structured development experiences, systematically presented in-group counselling activities in preschool or school. What is aimed at is the pupil's ability of learning how to learn, learning to work throughout their lives, and learning to live. The major fields approached are: *knowledge of self and others, educational and career development, career exploring and planning*. Whereas the implementation of curriculum is the responsibility of counsellors, the school representatives and the local community are supposed to provide support. Of the strategies employed we mention:

- class learning activities;
- group activities outside the classroom, meeting pupils needs and interests.

Topics approached: *self-knowledge, conflict solving, personal responsibility, career exploration and awareness, decision-making abilities, substance abuse prevention, learning skills, job hunting.*

Michigan School Counsellor Association suggests that the time allotted to activities in the *Counselling and guidance* curricula be distributed as such:

- in primary school: 30-40%;
- in lower secondary school: 20-30%;
- in upper secondary school: 15-25%.

Target population

- pupils in primary, secondary, high school, vocational school;
- young graduates of various levels of education and training who are in search of a job;
- adults in process of professional re-conversion (for whom the educational approach is materialized in stimulation and motivation to take short- and long-term training), re-entering active life, etc.

Examples, case studies, exercises

In **Appendix 1** we enumerate the succession of learning sequences for the *Communication and social skills* module, for different levels and grades, in the curricular area *Counselling and guidance* implemented in Romania, 2005.

In **Appendix 2** we present a series of topics and results of learning (primary and lower secondary school), from a *comprehensive Counselling and guidance programme* in Michigan schools, SUA (1992).

Appendix 1

Communication and social skills

Adapted from Curricular area counselling and guidance, 2005

Compulsory education

Level	Reference objectives	Examples of learning activities	Contents	Assessment strategies
1 st grade	At the end of the 1 st grade, pupils can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize basic emotions in varied situations Practice group cooperation behaviour 	The following activities are recommended in the 1 st grade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercises to express basic emotions in varied situations Analysis of some characters' emotions in various situations (poems, stories, cartoons) Pair work: mimicking emotions and recognizing them in others Group activities, teamwork, cooperation, non-cooperation, which are later analysed and compared 	<p><i>Emotion management:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressing basic emotions Understanding and respecting the emotions of others <p><i>Social skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group cooperation behaviour Relationships with colleagues who need support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressing personal ideas and arguments through: poster, drawing, collage Individual and group project Portfolio Practical activities Individual self-assessment forms
5 th grade	At the end of the 5 th grade, pupils can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop strategies to adequately and safely express emotions 	The following activities are recommended in the 5 th grade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group work: verbal / non-verbal expression of the factors that facilitate or block thought expression 	<p><i>Emotion management:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship between events, thoughts, and the emotions generated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressing personal ideas and arguments through: poster, drawing, collage

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate group cooperation behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listing situations involving difficult emotions: winning or losing in a competition, losing a friend, changes in the family Cartoons, discussions showing respect and care for the others Group cooperation / non-cooperation scenarios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How we handle difficult emotions (anger, sadness)? <p><i>Social skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of the contribution of each group member Advantages of group cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual and group project Portfolio Practical activities Individual self-assessment forms
8 th grade	<p>At the end of the 8th grade, pupils can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the importance of social responsibility in various contexts Show respect for points of view expressed Anticipate changes in family roles throughout life 	<p>The following activities are recommended in the 8th grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercises to identify situations where social responsibility is necessary Practicing pros/cons Press monitoring: how prejudices and stereotypes appear in news, articles Group tasks, collage, scenarios on “women’s/men’s role in private and public life” 	<p><i>Social skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social responsibility in the following contexts: school, family, community <p><i>Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respecting various points of view. Prejudices and stereotypes: sources and consequences <p><i>Family</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in family roles throughout life. Impact of role stereotypes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressing personal ideas and arguments through: poster, drawing, collage Individual and group project Portfolio Practical activities Individual self-assessment forms

Appendix 2

Adapted from *Comprehensive counselling and guidance programme for Michigan schools, 1992*

Education levels Topics	Primary school Results of learning	Lower secondary school Results of learning
I. Career exploration and planning A. Career exploration, planning, development B. Being a boy or a girl at school or at work C. How I make use of my spare time	A. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out more information on careers Know the reasons behind people's work Know what they prefer and can do best B. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handle jokes from classmates in case they are interested in occupations usually chosen by the opposite sex Be aware that they can choose any job they like and can do well C. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get to know various occupations, sports, and leisure activities 	A. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of their interests and abilities, and how they influence their career Understand the importance of plans for the future regarding education, training, and jobs B. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handle disapproval in case they are interested in a course or job usually chosen by the opposite sex Become aware of the fact that any courses or jobs are acceptable for either women or men C. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify adequate leisure activities
II. Knowledge of self and others A. Self-understanding and acceptance	A. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know how to express certain thoughts and feelings important for themselves Become aware of own qualities and strengths Know how to handle difficulties and where to seek 	A. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of personal values Understand how thoughts and feelings can influence behaviour Become aware of physical, social, and emotional

<p>B. Decision making</p> <p>C. Understanding the others</p> <p>D. What drugs and alcohol can do to me and my friends</p> <p>E. Family responsibilities</p>	<p>help</p> <p>B. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose goals and elaborate plans • Know how to make decisions and act accordingly <p>C. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of what it means to be a good friend • Understand friends and colleagues • Ask help from parents, teachers, or other adults when they need it <p>D. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how alcohol and drugs harm the body and mind of a person • Know how to say “no” to people who will try to persuade them to drink alcohol or take drugs • Know where to ask for help, for themselves or friends, in case of difficulties with alcohol and drugs <p>E. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how they can be there for their parents, siblings, grandparents, or other family members • Be aware that certain events (removal, divorce, unemployment, death) can cause problems in a family • Know how they can take on responsibilities in the family 	<p>changes, specific for personal development</p> <p>B. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to choose between several alternatives to solve a problem • Accept the responsibility of their decisions <p>C. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to efficiently communicate thoughts and feelings • Respect the others even if different <p>D. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the effects of alcohol and drugs on the body and mind of a person • Be aware of the way alcohol and drugs can affect relationships • Know how they can help, ask for support for people having problems with alcohol and drugs <p>E. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that certain events (removal, divorce, unemployment, death) can cause problems in a family • Know how they can take on responsibilities in the family • Know where to seek support if the family gets in trouble
<p>III. Educational and career development</p> <p>A. Preparation for a job</p>	<p>A. -</p>	<p>A. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to apply for a job • Be informed regarding the expectations of employers

<p>B. Fundamental study and learning abilities</p> <p>C. How to learn about school from friends and others</p> <p>D. Study planning</p>	<p>B. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize their time • Listen and ask questions in class • Use their potential to the maximum in problem solving <p>C. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand challenges, requirements in subsequent stages of schooling • Know where they can ask for information on other secondary and high schools <p>D. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the requirements and expectations in the next school cycles • Choose optional subject matters according to their interests and aptitudes • Be aware that all subject matters are important at work and in daily life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know what jobs are available locally <p>B. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize their time • Listen and ask questions in class • Use their potential to the maximum in problem solving <p>C. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand challenges, requirements in the next stages of schooling • Know where they can request information on high schools <p>D. At the end of the learning unit, pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain information on the credit system and high school graduation requirements • Select courses according to their needs, interests, and career goals • Be aware that high school graduation prepares them for work or further study
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Method evaluation

Advantages:

- allows the active involvement of the beneficiary in the counselling process;
- represents support for self-knowledge, development of competences and attitudes necessary for elaborating future projects;
- has positive effects on learning motivation, by raising awareness on the necessity for further study in case of pupils and students, or continuing training in case of adults;
- supports equal chances in education by personalized approaches;
- favours maximal use of human resources by failure prevention and reaching educational and professional performances;
- prepares beneficiaries for lifelong learning.

Disadvantages:

- lack of a unitary national strategy for implementing the curricular area *Counselling and guidance*, involving the main stakeholders (pupils, parents, teachers, school counsellors, principals, representatives of the community);
- limited access to training, initial and continuing, of teachers in charge with the *Counselling and guidance* activities, focused on adequate atmosphere, use of interactive strategies, and topics with applicability in daily life;
- discontinuity between *Counselling and guidance* activities in the educational system and those promoted in the labour system.

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Real Game

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History

Bill Barry created *Real Game*. The thought occurred to him when his daughter protested against the relevance of what she was learning in school: "*I am never going to use any of these things once I'll finish school*". Seven years later almost three million pupils were using the game.

The programme originates in Newfoundland, Canada, and it is implemented in Canadian and United States schools. Ever since 1997 there has been an increased interest in introducing the game in schools in Great Britain, where it started with a short version, in small groups. During 1998-1999 the second phase, of extension, had started. As a consequence of assessment studies in Great Britain at the beginning of 2000, one single version of the game is now in use.

Theoretical background

Real Game represents the experimental variant of the simulation method. It originates in educational, industrial, military and economic practice. In essence it is simulation of a situation (decision making, anticipating the communication, etc.) which, in relation to the given topic, circumscribes a framework for cognitive action and makes participants perform certain parts / roles.

In *psychology*, Freud states that imaginary characters are a construction of the child's wishes of finding solutions to the conflicts overbearing with him or her, while Şchiopu (1997) considers the simulation game a "fundamental form of activity with the same importance as learning and work activities."

In *sociology*, Mead and Kuli have researched small traditional cultures and primary social groups and have proposed three stages of socialization, seen as role perception processes:

- *imitation* – mechanical repetition of the activities observed;
- *game* – passing from one role to the next, moving away from the role already played;
- *group member* – perceiving one's own role, when the formula "I" becomes operational as appreciation mechanism by the group of the social role played by a member.

Lallement (1993) understands the simulation game as a role assimilation mechanism, in the sense of expected behaviour ("*How would I like others to see me?*").

In *pedagogy*, the simulation game is, according to Bruner, a means of activation. Thus, pupils find themselves in the position of actors, protagonists and not just simple spectators, which corresponds very well to the dynamics of their thinking, imagination, and affective life, to an inner need of action and affirmation. They feel the need to establish a relation between abstract thinking and concrete gestures, and this is precisely why they decide on role-play.

What is simulation in the context of Real Game?

- It is a copy of reality where players face certain situations requiring decision making;
- It is a learning model allowing clients to express ideas for other group members, made usually of three or four people;
- It is related to *Role-Play*, but in *simulation* human subjects keep their own personality and are not required to play another character.

The realism can be enhanced especially in long-term simulations, by orienting the group so as to reproduce the majority of the conditions of the environment where the exercise is supposed to be taking place. For example, for an action located in an office, the classroom may be adapted to represent a real office. Other educational resources that may be used to create a space compatible with a classroom activity during a counselling session are: the blackboard may be adapted to suggest an announcement board, the desks may be grouped or separated to be cubicles, etc.

Method presentation

Real Game is composed of a series of six interactive learning programmes meant to make a close connection between classroom activities and real life, and at the same time facilitate the exploration of career development. In other words, it represents a programme built as a game, so as to bring real life into the classroom and/or counselling session. This work modality targets the awareness and expression of one's own aspirations regarding the future personal and professional life. The content of activities greatly depends on the spontaneity and creativity of the counsellor.

The purpose of the game: acquiring and developing the necessary competences for the development of one's personal career.

The objectives of the programme allow clients to:

1. know the way in which already acquired competences and knowledge are directly related to future work roles, and how by practicing new development opportunities arise;
2. discover personal aptitudes and competences regarding life and work roles in positive and efficient interaction with others;
3. develop a positive and realistic self-image;
4. explore financial management and become aware of the link between education and training, income and lifestyle aspects (e.g. availability for family, community, and leisure);
5. work in a team to solve problems, make decisions, stimulate communication competences, and take on multiple roles in life and at work;
6. practice various roles at work and in the community, and discover those issues that bring professional and personal satisfaction;
7. analyse events that were successful and convert adversity into opportunity;
8. know the means of looking for a job, increase the efficiency of personal marketing and time management;
9. use various decision-making means and techniques regarding work and other aspects of personal life.

The principles of the game:

1. **Change is constant** – we transform permanently, so does the world around us, including the world of work. Since an employee will not be able to keep the same job from the beginning to the end of professional life due to the changes in the contents of the occupation itself and the dynamic of the labour market, adaptability will be an important and necessary quality.

2. **Learning is permanent** – on graduating from high school, college, university, learning is not over. People must admit and consider the advantages of existing lifelong learning opportunities.
3. **Focusing on the path of life** – “the journey” through life is like driving: there must be a destination, progress is gradual, attention must be paid to unpredictable events, obstacles, alternatives, etc.
4. **Following aspirations and interests** – aspirations, dreams allow understanding of what people truly want. Dreams may be difficult to pursue, but this should not hinder anyone from trying.
5. **Supporting people around one** – “the journey of life” is not made by oneself; friends, family, teachers, neighbours – anyone of them may be willing and capable allies in certain stages of career development.

These principles help clients reflect systematically on the relevance of each activity segment related to the larger picture of life.

The methodology of the game

Clients are asked to present their own experiences, qualifications, or competences acquired in school. For *Counselling and guidance* classes, during the game, the concept of career is understood as “journey”.

“Journey” means going through stages by key messages to simulate the path to the desired career. “The journey” is made of 13 sessions that in turn include segments of activity and discussion. These sessions represent landmarks for the way the teacher counsellor can lead the game.

Lesson 1 – Real transition

The counsellor will briefly present the game to the class (objectives, tasks, etc.).

Lesson 2 – Real jobs

Pupils will be given descriptions of certain occupations / jobs / professions, and they will learn how to use occupational profiles throughout the game (and will be able to make the difference, for example, between professions according to the lifestyle associated).

Lesson 3 – Real openings

Pupils will hear the five important principles of the game (change is constant, learning is permanent, etc.), and then they will form working groups and learn about career openings (admission terms to various study levels and opportunities, candidate selection criteria, practical education and training, etc.).

Lesson 4 – *Real role*

Pupils will be told that they must choose a desired profession associated to a certain career for the future (doctor, engineer, pilot, teacher, watchmaker, dental technician, etc.). In addition, they will choose the appropriate educational path for the career they have chosen. The chosen profession and career will be maintained throughout the game to ensure continuity.

Lesson 5 – *Spin game*

Pupils will be presented the components of the *spin game*; it is made up of a game board and spinning indicator. On the board are written the following fields / school subjects: “General Knowledge, Mathematics, Language and Creative Arts, Social Studies, Sciences, Health and Sports”. The questions vary with the subject matter and age.

Lesson 6 – *Transition to spin game – I*

Pupils practice for the first time on the board by spinning the indicator that will stop – on command – at a certain situation (see Exercise 1, below); then they take on their role in attempting to simulate the profession indicated on the board. The stake is solving the respective problems through simulation.

Lesson 7 – *Time and transition – I*

Pupils analyse the profession / situation chosen – as it has been mentioned above – the necessary level of education / qualification, personal experience, work conditions, the role played by parents and the community (business people, NGOs, etc.) in that profession. They will draw up a graph of the time necessary to attain the profession, in view of a concrete temporal connection between the present and future situation.

Lesson 8 – *Transition to spin game – II*

Pupils re-start the spinning indicator on the game board and choose those situations that are in accordance with their studies (between 3rd and 12th grade). They will discuss and simulate the situations on the basis of experience accumulated in school. In addition, they will study various career development options (professional paths, consequences, advantages, limits, important personal attitudes and values etc.).

Lesson 9 – *Time and transition – II*

Pupils continue the analysis of education and training effects on their future career, as well as of the community on their vocational development (e.g. community actions in situations of crisis, social help, etc.). It is thus sought to make a synthesis and discuss the experiences acquired throughout schooling. The basic rules and the necessary skills for an interview are established.

Lesson 10 – *Preparing for the interview*

Pupils are divided in groups and create separate scenarios to inform and guide themselves regarding the essential competences acquired through life experience in relation to the subject mentioned. They will participate in simulated interviews, which will help them

understand the relation between school performance and success in personal and professional life.

Lesson 11 – *Interview*

Pupils take turns in being interviewed by a member of another group, to find whether they have the necessary abilities and experience to successfully reach the objective of an interview. Pupils in class assist to five interviews, each lasting approximately 10 minutes. Then they attempt to identify together the different modalities to obtain a job.

Lesson 12 – *Preparing for transition*

Using the knowledge gained from personal experience, pupils prepare to create their own Real Transition Plans.

Lesson 13 – *A real action plan*

Pupils create their own Action Plan and Budget Plan (for instance, how to spend the money for a holiday, how to spend leisure time, how to support themselves, etc.). At the end of the session they receive a Certificate of Participation.

Duration of the game: it can be played throughout a school year, with pupils in primary school until high school. It is recommended that activities last from one to two hours, function of the age and concentration capacity.

Evaluation: at the end of the counselling and guidance classes (exercises, debates, discussions, etc.) counsellors will have an impression on the way clients and groups acted and whether the exercise was a success. To evaluate the efficacy of the game, counsellor will take into account the following:

- Were the groups capable of working without assistance?
- Did they work efficiently and did they fulfil all tasks?
- Did they make decisions then consider other options of the game?
- Were all clients / groups sufficiently motivated?
- Were most the interactions real and natural?
- Did clients feel that the exercise was beneficial?

The role of the community in the game

The word “play” represents an operational notion in the programme. *Real Game* is focused on activities that are practical and applied, particularly pupil-oriented, and considering the impact the game has on them. *The role of the community:* acquiring a realistic, formative meaning related to the work of adults. Clients set off on a “journey” in the world of adults. Stimulated, pupils practically take over the part of adults, earn and spend, pick a house, create a city, etc. – everything in a classroom together with parents and members of the community.

Elements to consider

- A) Are the clients sufficiently relaxed to handle the demands of the simulation exercise?

If some clients do not feel comfortable with the game, the simulation should allow them to retire and their role be taken over by a more relaxed colleague in the group. The counsellor must have a rather neutral role, to encourage pupils to be active and show initiative.

- B) Should group composition be based on the different skills of their members, or should they have common interests?

Since counsellors know their clients best, they must be the ones to decide in what way can maximum of benefit be drawn for the largest number of participants. If they consider that less advanced players would benefit from the help of their more advanced colleagues, it is preferable to opt for mixed skills groups. In other words, counsellors should base their decision of making up the groups on client knowledge and aptitudes. Susceptibility must be considered in forming the groups, so that the clients do not perceive the existence of “good” or “poor” groups.

- C) The role of the counsellor

Counsellors may consider, among other things, a diagnostic / assessment exercise by observing clients’ behaviours, feelings, emotions, neuro-physiological aspects, hesitations with regard to a given situation.

Target population

Real Game targets pupils from the 3rd until the 12th grade, and adults (in total there are 6 categories of programmes):

- 3rd and 4th (fun)
- 5th and 6th (creating, doing)
- 7th and 8th (playing)
- 9th and 10th (being)
- 11th and 12th (finding a job)
- adults (real life)

For each target group the following aims are held in view:

Pupils / Adults – constructing and strengthening a positive and realistic self-image, discovering personal competences, skills and abilities; practicing teamwork, decision-making, communication and problem solving; exploring the satisfaction work can give; getting to know the relation between work and other roles in life; relating knowledge and experience acquired in school to career choice; making a connection between learning and long-term gain; acquiring self-information skills regarding the education and training offers; understanding the concept of *lifelong learning* and integration in the community.

Parents – direct support in education and career development for their children; supporting young overcome personal, family, social obstacles that are in the way of their choosing a profession, developing a career plan to answer an internal self-achievement need and not to conform to the requirements of others.

Teachers / counsellors – drawing up a curriculum according to the local situation, pupils' interests and needs; supporting the development of general competences necessary in career by using an already compiled set of work instruments; promoting the interaction between teachers, pupils, parents and community; supporting and improving the practices bound to curricular areas: "People and Society", "Language and communication", "Counselling and guidance" in order to facilitate the career choice.

Community and business people – direct support in education of future employees; examples of educational, professional training and successful careers, enhancing the socialization of pupils / adults; getting clients acquainted with the way of thinking, living and action specific to a certain professional status; developing the problem solving skills and the empathic capacities, that is to understand opinions, emotions, and aspirations of people around them.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Exercise 1: "Language and Creative Arts":

If the arrow on the game board stops at the triangle pointing at "Language and Creative Arts", the client will be asked to pick a card from that set. The client may bet the following question: "*Which of the following occupations related to the passion for books combines organization with computer skills and public relations?*"

- a. *books editor*
- b. *writer*
- c. *librarian*

The correct answer is *librarian*. The connection between the school subjects and the world of work will be explained.

Exercise 2

According to the level of the class and/or groups, the exercise may be extended to six meetings, with correspondingly complex activities.

Session 1: The counsellor explains the class that due to the lack of doctors in Africa, the Romanian professionals have the chance of working there. There are few positions available and the money is not enough. In principle, pupils must decide on 10 people who will have the opportunity of initiating this new community and survive in the given situation.

It is told that each group has to:

- coordinate the selection of medical staff;
- prepare the ground at destination for the first few weeks;
- lay the grounds of a new society of viable medical assistance.

The counsellor will announce that starting with the respective stage of the game he or she will no longer participate directly in the simulation.

Session 2: Clients are asked to decide within the group what categories of specialists are necessary and in what fields. The groups will also have to choose their spokespersons. The president decides on how the group will work during the next few sessions, but the opinions in the respective groups must be taken into account.

Session 3 (or sessions 3 and 4, for a more detailed discussion): Groups begin their activity by “selecting” the necessary medical staff in the new location abroad. The secretary writes down the aspects of procedure. The group decides on how the journey will take place to the new work destination.

Session 4 (or sessions 4 and 5): The groups discuss the way activities will take place in the first few weeks in a new country, and debate on what is needed so that the respective community resists for a long time.

Session 5 (or session 6): Spokes persons for each group present the conclusions reached and the reasons behind the respective decisions. For instance, group X has decided that no person over 50 is eligible for the journey and work under the circumstances. The group can interrogate the spokespersons about the choices and decisions made; if necessary, the specialists themselves (doctors) may take part in the final discussion on behalf of the support of group spokespersons. Should there be time, the decisions of each group could be posted for the entire class to read.

Exercise 3

The counsellor must think of a real situation in a profession that is represented in their community. For example, one pupil is an engineer, another is a teacher, another wishes to work in a bank, etc. Then pupils are asked to imagine a conversation where they recount various aspects deriving from their professions. The dialogue is supposed to be as close as possible to the real situations of the respective community.

Exercise 4

For all grades

Two parents may be asked to present their professional tasks to the pupils interested. Both should bring an authentic and practical element of their jobs, since they are presenting their real work (name of the profession – occupation – position – job, qualification, object of work, atmosphere, risks, advantages / disadvantages, opportunities, necessary skills, salary, vacations, etc.).

Exercise 5

For all grades

The clients may be asked: “Does your career begin ...”

- a. ... on graduation?”
- b. ... on employment?”
- c. ... when you discover you particularly enjoy the work?”

As a consequence of the answers given, the counsellor may engage in a conversation with the entire class in order to find out their future intentions regarding career, on the basis of their aptitudes, interests, attitudes, beliefs, conflicts, prejudice, feelings, and values.

Appendix

A possible model for integration of the *REAL GAME* in the curricular area COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE

THE CURRICULAR AREA: COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE – 11 TH GRADE													
CONTENTS	1. Real Transition	2. Real Jobs	3. Real openings	4. Real Role	5. Spin Game	6. Transition to spin game- I	7. Time and transition – I	8. Transition to spin game – II	9. Time and transition – II	10. Preparing for an interview	11. Interview	12. Preparing for transition	13. A real action plan
Personal self-knowledge and development: <i>Examples of methods and techniques proposed for delivering contents</i>													
Personal SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)	X		X						X	X	X	X	X
Projecting aspirations and goals in varied exercises: “My favourite future, my possible future”			X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X
Keeping a personal diary, questionnaires, inter-knowledge exercises	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Information and educational management: <i>Examples of methods and techniques proposed for delivering contents</i>													
Debates between pupils – teachers – counsellors with regard to the role of learning in achieving personal and professional success	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

[illegible]

Method evaluation

Overview of the programme utility

It has been found by a questionnaire to Canadian pupils on *Real Game* that the programme offers information on and makes them aware of:

Indicators	Percent (%)
Their own future and self-image	100
World of work / professions	97
Communication	95
Work satisfaction	95
Financial planning	92
Self-awareness	92
Teamwork	90
Career planning	89
Posture	89
Personal involvement capacity	86
Equity and employment opportunities	82
Lifelong learning	82
“Learning to learn” in a changing world	78
Career information	72

Advantages:

Aside from the specific cognitive aspects of certain activities, such a programme contributes to achievement in pupils and adults of some aspects related to attitudes, values, motivation. Thus:

1. From the point of view of *clients (pupils or adults)*, *Real Game* allows:
 - discovery of their own skills, abilities, attitudes;
 - positive strengthening of self-image;
 - establishing a direct relation between the knowledge acquired in school, vocational choices, and the roles characteristic in the world of work;
 - using new vocabulary and new communication structures;
 - making one’s own decisions freely;
 - solving tasks individually or in group;
 - grounding choices and decisions in experience.

2. From the point of view of *counsellors*, *Real Game* allows:

- ensuring the relevance of the situations presented, and stimulating the clients' interests by evincing the practical aspects of school activities;
- forming working groups by the interests of the members;
- organizing an intermediary training to develop career-specific capacities and attitudes;
- focusing on ideas, motivations, continuing information and training etc., for career development and adaptation to the requirements of the labour market at the earliest age;
- combining interactive work strategies: brainstorming, debate, problem posing, role-play, critical thinking, exercises, etc., without diminishing the importance of other traditional methods such as: explanations, demonstration, theoretical exposition, conversation, observation;
- monitoring the use of concepts in group and by the pupils;
- remedying flaws as the programme runs.

3. As regards school *curriculum*, *Real Game* allows:

- adapting the curriculum (designed after the local requirements) to the interests and needs of the beneficiaries;
- introducing other additional methods alongside those included in the teaching framework, in order to deliver the contents and develop the competences during classes of Counselling and guidance;
- monitoring and assessing the programme, which can lead to evincing other types of benefits related to an increased level of confidence on the part of the clients in a field that is very little known, enriching the vocabulary, interiorising concepts, attitudes and values.

4. As regards the *community* and *business people*, *Real Game* allows:

- an increase in objectivity by describing the competences in terms of noticeable results that can be assessed on the market;
- offering consultation and counselling for the labour market to enhance a more direct knowledge of the following aspects: the labour market in general, policies in the field of employment, human resource needs, the economic system, etc.;
- creating opportunities of information and training by means of activities performed during the Counselling and guidance class, as well as opening motivating perspectives for the actors involved;
- making people sensitive and aware by conveying useful information to clients with a view to lifelong education and training.

Disadvantages:

- using the programme involves certain material and financial resources (purchasing the right to use, translate, adapt, print);
- requires adequate and detailed training of counsellors and instructing clients in the use of the technique for the exact knowledge of what is expected of them in certain stages of the programme;
- there is a risk that less motivated or timid clients withdraw as the programme progresses;
- counsellors may feel inefficient and/or excluded from sessions they do not take part in.

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¹⁴ I would like to thank Mr Phil Jarvis, Vice-President of *Partnership Development, National Life/Work Center* (Canada), for the support provided in gathering information on the method.

Student Record

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History

Knowing the personality of a pupil has been the fundamental concern of any professional pedagogue, and it is implicit in the process of teaching and learning.

Socrates' method of reaching the truth, as a heuristic method of (self) knowledge and education, is perhaps among the first exercises of becoming aware of the need to record data on the progress of a disciple during schooling. Certainly, precursors were confronted with the difficulty of keeping the records and this is why history has nevertheless kept little information on the academic evolution of some great personalities in the ancient world.

Some "reports" come from the Middle Ages to say that court masters were obliged to present their seniors the performances of their offspring in the trials of knightly arts or ecclesiastic studies.

The Renaissance spurs humanist education on and contributes to deeper knowledge due to personalities like: Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, who classify education by age stages and underline the importance of retaining and carrying data on pupils from one age to the other.

School record becomes a constant concern in the 19th century, when the experimental pedagogy intensifies investigations regarding the development of the pupils' individuality. The 20th century, which Ellen Key called "the century of the child", places at the centre the scientific research of children and adolescents. Binet, Claparede, Dewey,

Stern, Ghidionescu, Theodosiu ground through their work the methodology of data recording, and propose “a variety of models with various names such as: charts, notebooks, records, files, sheets, etc., with the mention that they are: individual, psychological, pedagogical, anthropological, medical-pedagogical, vocational, scholar” (Muster, 1971).

Use student records was stimulated at the end of the last century by the necessity of a differentiated approach and by the development of educational and vocational guidance, as a separate objective of the educational system.

At the European level we distinguish four periods in the evolution of student record:

- a. from the beginning of the century until at the end of World War I: most European countries, including Romania, introduce student records and make them compulsory in schools by law (Austria 1910, Bavaria 1913, Saxony 1920, France 1923, Romania 1923);
- b. the period between the World Wars: student records become a general method (USA 1930, Germany 1935). Introducing them is done in parallel with the educational and vocational guidance;
- c. after the World War II: educational and vocational guidance and student records become compulsory by law (Bulgaria 1968, Poland 1957, Hungary 1961, Czech Republic 1967, Sweden 1962, Canada 1966, Japan 1963);
- d. the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st: there is an organic connection between the evolution of the counselling and guidance system and the role of student records. There are differences by countries function of the existence of specialized guidance and counselling systems within and/or outside the school. Where these services are official both within the school, in the educational system, and outside, through independent public or private services, the functionality of student records has been considerably increased.

Practitioners suggest filling out a student record only for exceptional cases (special educational needs overachievers, risky behaviour) or at the demand of the school management. As a documentary instrument, it is usually integrated in the school file next to other records or, more recently, in the guidance portfolio drawn up by specialists in cooperation with the subjects and their families.

Recent research in psychology and educational sciences speak of the importance of personal experiences, efficient adaptation to the rapid evolution of present-day society, so that “inserting” the pupil within the “limits” imposed by the student record regarding the quantity and quality of knowledge, competence, description of mental processes and attributes, age particularities, etc. is no longer a priority, as it was a few decades ago.

Theoretical background

In the analysis of the structure and contents of student record, we will make use of several expert opinions trying to define the instrument.

Student record is *“a work instrument meant to collect and systematize significant information for pupils’ personality and prognosis of their development”* (Radu, 1974, apud Cristea, 2002).

Student record is also defined in two Romanian dictionaries of pedagogy (1979, 1984) as *“a work instrument ... allowing by recording the data a longitudinal and transversal study on the development of pupils’ personality. The record contains various information, scientifically processed, classified according to age, and regarding the social environment, family education, physical condition, work capacity, work style and performance throughout schooling, intellectual, technical, artistic, organizational and sports capacities, features of temperament and character, etc.”*

In the Dictionary of Educational and Vocational Guidance, psycho-pedagogical or student record is considered *“a document that synthesises and systematizes information on the pupil, gathered throughout schooling by psychological methods, taken over by statistical methods and interpreted psycho-pedagogically.”* The record is a document of professionals responsible for career guidance, who help *“put a mental diagnosis and give guidance advice”* (Tomşa, 1996). By Voiculescu (2001) student record is *“an X-ray of personality, mental and physical evolution, environmental conditions, school results and development perspectives”*.

Synthetically, student record is for the counsellor:

- a means of recording excerpts from work, written products or tests with a view to documenting on the school evolution of a pupil;
- a sheet with quotations and informative materials, as well as fundamental personal / biographical data;
- a data collection and recording method, which is personal, educative, social;
- a systematic information collecting plan on a pupil, in order to know and explain his or her school conduct;
- a scientific work instrument for the longitudinal / transversal study of a pupil’s personality;
- a technique to facilitate efficient formative intervention in shaping and guiding pupils;
- personal history of a pupil in an educational cycle;

- integral part of the school file, principal's book, guidance and counselling portfolio.

Psychological knowledge is a difficult and complex process requiring specific competences and aptitudes for an objective evaluation. Both school specialists (educational counsellors, psychologists) and those who directly work with children and adolescents: teachers, tutors, teacher counsellors etc. focus on the following aspects when filling out a school record:

- data gathering to identify the pupil;
- observing behaviour, skills, cognitive particularities, as apparent along the entire educational process and not sporadically (except for some significant situations);
- investigating one's personal experience / style: What do they think? What do they feel? How do they behave? What difficulties do they encounter? What do they like best? How do they relate to the others? What do they want to change? What are the most important objectives? What is the network of significant persons in their life? How do they perceive their own family? What strengths do they consider themselves to have? etc.;
- making a synthesis of the data meant to support pupils in their decisions in school / professional realm.

Counsellors are required to give a practical proof of competence in identifying the obstacles of psychological assessment that is necessary in such a method: lack of standardized instruments for the target population, lack of experience in using them, non-existence of basic training programmes (e.g. elements of psycho-diagnostic, methodology of psychological assessment, methods of personality assessment, projective tests, psychological statistics, etc.), the oscillating trust in the counsellor, and last but not least unavailability of license or copyright of tests and questionnaires for assessment in accordance to the Law no. 213 of 2004 regarding the practice of free-lanced psychologists, founding, organization and functioning of the College of Psychologists in Romania. (www.apsi.ro, www.copsi.ro)

Method presentation

Known under various names (e.g. psycho-pedagogical characterization, pedagogical record, psychological record, educational and vocational guidance record, observation chart, etc.), and already established in the vocabulary of people engaged in education, we have concluded that **student record**:

- is a work instrument to assess and characterize the child, probably most often used and best known in education;
- investigates aspects of the biological, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, attitudinal development that are constituted in a synthesis product helping the predictions regarding the educational and vocational future of a pupil, concrete suggestions and action pathways;
- includes data on the important age-wise acquisitions related to personality, adaptation to school requirements, etc. obtained with specific investigation instruments, general and particular appreciations regarding the level of development;
- notes information on pupils regarding the social environment in general, and the circle of friends, class, family, community, etc. in particular;
- is part of the enrolment file into the 1st grade after preschool, alongside the medical record. In addition, it is an integral part of the teacher counsellor / class master's evidence book, and of the pedagogical guidebook of pupils in initial training to become teachers or educators;
- it is the quintessence of knowing a child in a certain learning cycle and (in some countries) at the workplace, equally useful for the person keeping the record and for the beneficiary.

On average, student records contain the following chapters:

- personal details of the child / pupil;
- family details;
- activity in preschool / school / high school;
- extra-curricular activities;
- information on the physical, mental, and social characteristics of pupils;
- general conclusions and appreciations;
- proposals, suggestions, action plan for personal and career development.

Badea (1997) suggests for a dynamic and complex characterization the concept of “maturation fields”, that is biological, psycho-behavioural, socio-familial, educational, with contents for each field. For example, the biological field is made up of: the system of physical growth (height, weight, motility, senses, organs, systems, sexual characteristics, biotype, predispositions, disorders), psychological development, daily diet (sleep, nutrition, hygiene, clothing, leisure activities), etc. Some correlations between fields are not absent, such as physical-educational: daily diet – success in school, health – success

in school, etc. or within the fields, psycho-behavioural: motivation – cognition – aptitudes – action.

Aspects giving uniqueness to the human subject will also be highlighted in student record: progress or failures, needs, interests, availabilities, temperament, emotions, attitudes, personality, intellectual aptitudes, passion, general level of performance, specific academic acquisitions, current situation, preferred situation, etc.

Each pupil is different, autonomous, unique, which leads to the conclusion that student record is a kind of “identity card”, special for everyone.

In some countries, school counsellors teamed with the school principal fill out student records. It includes academic acquisitions, special education needs, general and particular personality features, such as: relationship with colleagues, teachers, psycho-social maturity, self-discipline, energy, self-confidence, sense of humour, perseverance, leadership, resistance to stress, personal qualities and special talents, etc. (www.marymountrome.org).

Due to the fact that compulsory education in Romania recently has extended to 10 years, involvement of school counsellors in the assessment of pupils ought to be of very fine quality. The Department of Educational and Vocational Guidance (2001) in the Institute of Educational Sciences – Romania considers that student record or psycho-pedagogical record (regularly updated and with an annual synthesis) is an integral part of the assessment, counselling and guidance portfolio that accompanies the student in the transition from the 8th into the 9th grade, to high school or vocational schools.

It is important to say that student record is no longer compulsory in the current educational system, but where available, is a valuable support to getting complex knowledge about the pupils and to information management, with a view to making responsible and justified career-related decisions.

What is efficient psycho-pedagogical knowledge?

A good Student Record is filled out after an organized, systematic and permanent process of psycho-pedagogical observation and intervention, collecting data regarding the mental characteristics of the subject. For an objective and efficient psycho-pedagogical knowledge it is necessary to ensure the scientific parameters of the process (Ezechil; Lăzărescu Păiși, 2002). This is possible by:

- specialized instruction of teachers and teacher counsellors;
- using multiple means of knowledge (standardized tests and questionnaires, school records, etc.);
- observing behaviour and attitude, studying the subject’s personality in varied situations and places: during classes, breaks, extra-curricular activities, at home, etc.;

- gathering information from parents or legal guardians regarding certain psycho-pedagogical aspects of the subject;
- identifying individual and social factors of a proper bio-psycho-social development, success in learning, adaptation in school etc.;
- working with specialists in psycho-pedagogical assistance authorized in applying tests and questionnaires.

Target population

Student record can be filled out for preschoolers, pupils, students, young graduates, with the aid of: school counsellors, teachers, school doctors. Information is gathered from the subject himself/herself, parents, relatives, neighbours, community agents, social workers, circle of friends, classmates, teachers, school managers and administrative staff (laboratory workers, school secretary) with whom the subject comes in contact.

Educational institutions (kindergartens, graduate schools, vocational schools, high schools, colleges, universities, other public and private education and training providers) have developed their own records as personalized as possible, without being oblivious of the essential elements, common for most student records: personal details, social and economic context of the family, mental and physical characteristics, situation in school, etc.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Personalized model of a student record (a real case)

Personal data: Name: I. First Name: M-A; Personal Identification Number.: 1900306XXXXXX; Date of birth: 6 March 1990, Sibiu; Address: XX XXXXX Street, Sibiu.

At present a pupil in the 7th grade in the General School No. XX, Sibiu. Grades 1st to 4th at the same school.

Family: Origin: marriage.

Father: Name: I. First Name: M.; Age: 44, Sibiu. Education: 12 grades; currently plumber.

Mother: Name: I. First Name: D.; Age: 40, Sibiu. Education: 12 grades; currently takes training in accounting.

Siblings:

No.	Name and first name	Date and place of birth	Occupation
1.	I. R.	22.06.1987, Sibiu	10 th grade pupil
2.	I. S.	14.04.1982, Sibiu	3 rd year student
....

Extended family: maternal grandmother, pensioner.

Family climate: favourable to education and development.

Living conditions: apartment owned by parents, made of 3 rooms and annexes, running water, gas heating, electricity, good hygiene.

Family income per person: XXXX lei (total family budget). Other sources for covering the necessities: relatives in the country.

Health: very good; specific childhood diseases, slight speech disorders – correctible (dyslalia-sygmatisms), recommendation: speech therapy.

School results:

No.	Grade	General yearly average	Math	Maternal language	History	Geography	Physics	English	French	Sports	Behaviour
1.	5 th	8,96	9,03	7,55	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
2.	6 th	9,02	9,26	7,60	10	9	10	10	10	10	10
3.	7 th	9,33	9,03	7,50	10	9	9	10	10	10	10
...

School competitions: mathematics; history (regional phase, 2nd place); English.

Psychological data:

Attention – stable focus, distributive.

Memory – superior logical-mathematical reasoning, very good memory.

IQ = 118 / Raven – Standard Progressive Matrix.

Creativity – imaginative personal initiative.

Language – slight dyslalia-sygmatisms – non-maladaptive, correctable by therapy.

Temperament – dominantly sanguine-phlegmatic, extraverted, optimistic, prudent.

Personality – good colleague, disciplined, constant educational progress, organized, assertive leader.

Aptitudes – cognitive-intellectual.

Special aptitudes – English.

Affectivity – relatively well-balanced psycho-affectively; slight emotional instability.

Synthetic characterization:

Intelligence: I.Q.= 118.

Aptitudes or special interests: exact sciences and English.

More obvious personality traits: modest, disciplined, ambitious, organized, leader.

Dominant temperamental particularities: optimistic, cheerful.

Educational and professional guidance:

- parents' wish: medical school or related;
- pupil's aspirations: math or IT (considering his aptitudes for math and English);
- teachers' opinion: any science field.

Student record guide (that must accompany any practical model) recommends the following steps in operating with student-related data: collection, quantification, synthesis, and interpretation.

Method evaluation

Asked to “make an effort” and draft such a document, the teacher counsellor will consider **advantages** and benefits for the client (pupil, student):

- offers a synthetic characterization and a prognosis, by continuing, formative, and predictive assessment;
- helps identifying and recognizing quickly and efficiently the essential aspects of personality that can generate emotional, social, behavioural, or learning difficulties;
- prevention of misfits, educational and social failures;
- choosing the best approach to knowing the student (by strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, important in school and social success);
- integrating pupils with special education needs in “normal” schools and classes on the principle of inclusive education, by diminishing and eliminating discrimination;
- identifying and capitalizing on aptitudes and talents;
- educational and vocational guidance.

Disadvantages:

- on occasion student records are formally and unprofessionally filled out, being considered an “extra task” in the educational practice;
- requires a complex psycho-pedagogical training and, currently in Romania, a specialization in psychology;
- a negative label of the person characterized by “estimating his/her future evolution” based on the results obtained in tests or observations over time, may constitute a source of mistrust and therefore affect the pupil’s self-image.

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We present in the appendices a few **Student records** (Holban, 1970; Mărgineanu-Dăscălescu-Muster, 1970; Cristea, 2002) representative for the evolution in time of this instrument for educational and vocational guidance.

Appendix 1

STUDENT RECORD

(Holban, 1970, Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, Iași)

I. General data: Record no; School Town Pupil's name born in day month town county Schools attended and addresses					
Grade / School year / Name of school and town / Address / Commuter-lodging-hostel					
II. Health: Hereditary antecedents and harmful environmental conditions Personal antecedents – physical defects – sensorial dysfunctions General state of health Medical mentions with bearing on the educational process					
III. Family data: 1. Family (synthetic table)					
Name	Year of birth	Schooling	Profession / position	Income	Observations
Father					
Mother					
Children					
2. Characteristics of the family life 3. Degree of integration in the family 4. Attention paid by parents to the pupil's education 5. Influence from outside the family 6. School and family cooperation					
IV. School data: 1. School situation					

Grade / Department	Success indicators				Results in school subjects					
	Annual average		Rank among colleagues		Higher average			Lower average		
2. Degree of integration in school										
3. Roles										
4. Successes										
5. Activity in students' clubs										
6. Extra-curricular occupations										
7. Factors justifying school success or failure										
8. Recommendations for improving the education level										
V. Data on psychological structure:										
1. Characteristics of intellectual processes										
2. Affectivity – temperament –personality										
3. Aptitudes – interests – motivation										
4. Aspects requiring intervention										
VI. Synthetic appreciations:										
1. Biogram (compared against the class of students):										
Characteristics	School year									
	Very poor			Average				Proficient		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Performance										
Mental development										
Thinking mobility										
Memory										
Hyper-emotionality – balance										
Impulsiveness – balance										
Ambition										
Being used to work										
Integration in family										

Integration in school														
Learning conditions														
Health														
2. Psycho-pedagogical profile (experimental):														
Data	Test	Quota	Percentage											
			10	20	25	30	40	50	60	70	75	80	90	100
VII. Data regarding educational and vocational guidance:														
Pupil's aspirations														
Family wishes														
Class master's opinion														
Directed formative actions														
The record was filled out by:														
Name and first name / . Position / School / School year														

Appendix 2

STUDENT RECORD

(Mărgineanu; Dăscălescu; Muster, 1970, Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, Cluj)

Pupil's name born on in						
I. GENERAL SCHOOL / HIGH SCHOOL:						
Year / High School / Department	School year	School (address)	Class master	Observations		
I.						
II.						
III.						
IV.						
II. FAMILY DATA:						
Parents; profession: father mother						
Normal family (possibly: father deceased, mother deceased / parents divorced / step parents):						
Number of children the pupils is in the order of birth						
Social and moral atmosphere in the family and pupils' work conditions						
III. MEDICAL DATA:						
Chronic diseases, predispositions, physical deficiencies (that prejudice learning through chronic condition or its consequences and exclude certain professions)						
IV. PSYCHO-PEDAGOGIC PROFILE:						
No.	Aptitudes / Traits	Year / Level	I	II	III	IV
			Evolutional Psycho-sociogram (Superior – Medium sup. – Medium inf. – Inferior)			
1. Intellect						
2. Character						
3. Emotional stability						
4. Health						
5. Economic and socio-cultural conditions						
6. Interest / special calling for:						
7. Lack of interest-calling for:						
8. Theoretic / practical intelligence						

V. SCHOOL SITUATION:
Annual average / Rank among colleagues:
Best results (subject matter, point average, classification):
Poorest results (subject matter, point average, classification):
VI. SPECIALTY CLUBS THE PUPIL IS ACTIVE IN:
VII: SCHOOL COMPETITIONS AND AWARDS:
VIII. RESPONSIBILITIES:
IX. FAVOURITE PASTIMES:
X. PROFESSION DESIRED: by the pupil father mother
XI. CHARACTERIZATIONS – RECOMMENDATIONS (date, person in charge, signature of the teacher)

Appendix 3

STUDENT RECORD

(Cristea, 2002)

General information on the pupil:

Name and first name: Date and place of birth:

Data on family (occupation of parents, place of work, siblings / their social status, material / living conditions, income, etc.):

Socio-educational / family environment, hostel, lodging, etc. (conditions for study, attitude of family towards school; role played by family / other factors in the pupil's pedagogical guidance):

Results obtained in and outside the school:

Longitudinal study regarding the learning results (school year / subject matter / trimester / annual point average / graph of school progress or regress):

Particular successes in and outside the school:

Problems with learning and social integration (at school, at home, in the community, etc.):

Physical development and state of health:

Medical antecedents (diseases, traumas, special situations):

Physical, physiological, sensorial deficiencies (sight, hearing etc.):

Health problems occurring during the school year:

Important medical recommendations (making use of the pupil's medical record, together with the school doctor and the family):

Psycho-pedagogical characterization (longitudinal-transversal: annual, final):

Sense of observation (superior perception):

Attention (focus, volume, stability, mobility, distribution):

Skills (efficiency, quickness, integration in learning, productive work, creation):

Motivation:

for learning: level of internalisation the reason for learning: fear, rewards, grades, self-achievement;

hierarchy of interest: knowledge / scientific, artistic, socio-human; practical / technologic; industrial, agricultural, social-political, managerial, etc.

Affectivity (tendency towards emotional balance – unbalance):

Logical – mechanical memory, quick – slow:

Thinking: quality of the fundamental operations: analysis-synthesis – abstractization – generalization – comparison - illustration; quality of the instrumental operations: algorithmic-heuristic, quality of acquiring and capitalizing on the fundamental informational products: notions, judgements, reasoning, principles, laws, paradigms; quality of the informational – operational structures engaged: inductive-deductive-analogical reasoning; convergent-divergent:

General intelligence, confirmed by: the capacity to seize and solve problems and problematic situations:

Verbal intelligence, confirmed by the qualities of oral and written language expressed in the following indicators:

quick understanding of the meaning of words, sentences, phrases of a scientific, artistic, philosophic, technological nature:

fluency in speech, in demanding and complex situations:

Temperament personality features / expressed at the level of the dynamic-energetic base: introvert-extrovert-combined; stable-unstable-combined; sanguine – choleric – phlegmatic - melancholic:

Aptitude-related personality features / expressed at the level of efficiency in activity, in terms of process and product: general aptitudes / applicable in all fields, all school disciplines; special aptitudes / for certain fields, subject matters, etc.:

Personality features / expressed at the level of relationship with the world and the self:

attitude towards family, school, community, learning, productive work, creation, the self / tendencies to under-over-appreciate oneself, balanced self-appreciation:

voluntary directing of conduct (at school, at home, in the community, in society, etc.):

functional structure of personality / cognitive, emotional – motivational, volitional weight:

educational, professional and social guidance expressed at the end of the educational cycle through:

final psychological characterization seen as recommendation for the future or/and social activity (laying stress on positive features):

finalizing the decision regarding educational, professional and social guidance on the basis of correlation between: the options of pupil and his or her family (expressed every year) – motivation for certain subject matters and work sectors, the results obtained throughout the year, in and outside the school, recommendations of the class master, other teachers and “actors” in pupil’s education:

Scenario

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History

Origins of scenario go back into ancient times. Drama, considered the parent of all other types of scenarios subsequently developed (strategic, anticipatory, socio-economic, managerial, educational, simulative, therapeutic, etc.) is linked to the beginnings of the stage art, especially early theatre. From written rudiments about the ceremonies of prehistoric populations to current script-writing, the scenario technique has developed and is sustained by theatre waves of development along with the society: ancient theatre, medieval theatre, Renaissance theatre, classical, modern, realistic / surrealistic theatre. Scenario truly becomes indispensable to the art of show only at the beginning of the 20th century, with the advent of cinema, when script-writing has no choice but to become an art like the other components of cinema making: directing, acting, music composition, sound, stage design, etc.

Throughout the last century, the art of cinema gradually transforms itself into an industry due to the technological evolution, and script writing becomes an independent field. Today it is unanimously admitted that creating a script is an art requiring not only talent but also superior training. More often than not, the value of a script, alongside directing and acting, makes the success of a film.

The influence of the scenario technique has extended over other fields that have adapted it successfully: culture (music, painting, literature, journalism, radio, public relations, television etc.), medicine (psychotherapy), and education.

Military art uses it to develop specific tactical and strategic scenarios. The history of military retains successful models of battle scenarios turned famous even in the ancient

world: the battle of Gaugamela (334 B.C.) where Alexander the Great defeated Darius III with an army ten times smaller), the battle of Marathon (490 B.C.), Thermopile (480 B.C.), while in the Romanian history we have Vaslui (1475), Călugăreni (1595) won by armies that were outnumbered, but fought by novel strategic and tactical scenarios drawn up by commanders of genius.

Another category of scenarios taken over and adapted by educational and career management are the anticipatory ones used in socio-economic, financial prognoses, geopolitics, demography, and meteorology.

Although they have been a constant subject for mankind since ancient times (let us not forget that the famous Delphi oracle asked to offer “scenarios” for important events, as wars and journeys), anticipatory scenarios attract the attention of scientists in 1950s, becoming an object for futurology, the science of future (first mentioned by Flechtheim, 1943).

“In our age, the interdependence of the constitutive processes of societies and the globalisation of economic, social, military relations has led to the emergence of a distinct field of investigation in the form of futurology.” (Dictionary of sociology, 1993).

Since 1980s, when *careerology* starts out as “a science of developing human potential throughout career”, strategic and anticipatory scenarios have been studied and applied intensely to career counselling as well.

Theoretical background

Etymologically, the word scenario and its entire lexical family is based in the Latin root **scaena**, with multiple meanings added function of the context: stage, theatre, show, pomp, intrigue, set-up, rhetoric school, suggesting as many possibilities of understanding (Romanian Explanatory Dictionary DEX, 1975; <http://dexonline.ro>).

Synthetically, scenario (Rom. *scenario*, Fr. *scenario*, It. *scenario*) is a concept representing:

- the succinct text of a play, film, action, etc., usually containing technical directions for directing and staging. Scenarios also meet the demands of readers. Radio scripts are often adaptations of literary texts (especially in the form of theatre plays) to the requirements of radio broadcasting (Guțanu, 1999);
- the action, process or events staged;
- a process unfolding after a pre-established plan. It has a figurative sense, by extension (<http://dexonline.ro>).

The possible verb derived means to transpose a text, a happening or an event into a script (Romanian Explanatory Dictionary, 1988). Moreover, a noun has been created in Romanian to describe the compulsive tendency to develop post-factum mental scenarios for any event with some social implications.

In dramatic arts, therefore, the scripts cover both the written basis of what happens on the stage and the happening itself, as a process. The meanings have been transferred to numerous fields, “scenario” evoking today in common language both the written part and the “movie” of the action, in its temporal unfolding.

Counselling has taken over these meanings through education, when using scenarios in drama, role-play, simulation, debates and expositions with an opponent.

Gradually, the notion has enriched by adapting the traditional dramatic scenario to the specific circumstances of other fields. We mean military strategy that gives (strategic) scenario a spatial and temporal perspective, depth, planning and prediction. In military art and strategic management, scenarios go beyond the meaning of a simple text, and are a heuristic method of strategic planning and intuitive forecast that “exploits the capacity of leaders to formulate ample and complex visions as a result of extensive and in-depth information knowledge related to the phenomenon, process, action or activity that makes the object of prediction” (www.actrus.ro/biblioteca/cursuri/management/habian/a31.pdf).

In order to stay in competition, marketing upgrades the scenario to the rank of “a systematic study trying to determine the probable evolution of the market, process that might influence the dominant industry or the market patterns; the creation of scenarios allows a company to adapt the strategy so that the risks caused by major changes on the market remain minimal” (Lorenzo, 1993).

Social prognosis and management are the newest fields to have adopted the technique of scenario and to have included it in their current methodological system. Scenarios as prognosis instruments analyse “the evolution of a complex system starting from the current tendencies and conditions of the system, as well as from the sum of actions of the external environment on it” (Dictionary of sociology, 1993).

As managerial activity, scenarios are the detailed description of a hypothetical situation, seeking a solution strategy (Joița, 2000).

In drawing up major strategies, prognoses (social, geo-political, economic), military arts and (strategic) management systematically and simultaneously use a continuum of methods (extrapolation, heuristics, pertinence trees, stimulating expert creativity) in which scenarios are irreplaceable. From this perspective, the scientific, prospective, heuristic and creative aspects of scenario are underlined.

This terminological and semantical analysis has led us to conclude that Scenario:

- is a complex notion describing a multivalent, multifunctional, flexible activity regarding the domain it serves (artistic / scientific or theoretic / practical);

- has evolved together with the great historical periods and can be today classified according to the temporal criterion (transversal / longitudinal or past, present, future), according to value (quantitative / qualitative), thematically (artistic, military, economic, political, demographic, educational, cultural, meteorological, etc.);
- appears as a method, technique, instrument, study, “weapon”, strategy, operation, text, process, plan (conscious or subconscious), project, simulation, problem, solution, etc., depending on where is used;
- occupies an ever larger area in many prediction sciences, having become indispensable in futurology;
- in the educational process (as didactic scenario) it has certainly become a “strategic” element to guide human resources;
- in career counselling, it can be put to use in multiple ways, creatively adapting all its forms.

Method presentation

Clients seek counselling regarding the most varied problems of life, and hope to find plausible solutions to their problems.

This is why practitioners must “recompose” for their clients their particular situation, segment by segment, scene by scene, in order to help them play their part and discover solution alternatives for their situation. This is the end of simulation in any field, not just counselling. Whether this is done by dramatic means, games or on simulators (technical systems that are authentic or electronic), the simulation needs a previously devised scenario, usually written.

Simulative scenarios reproduce or imitate action / the real model with a view to learning, by respecting its functional and structural principles. Clients as actors cross the experience of their own role, explore variants, discover solutions by deduction, enter relationships, make decisions and solve conflicts. A model of simulative scenario would be for an occupational application, namely a trial for law students (see the article: **Simulation**).

Life scenario is a key concept in transactional analysis, defined as “an explanatory theory of personality and a psychotherapeutic system dedicated to personal growth and change” (www.mindmaster.ro/AnalizaTranzactionala/tabid/70/Default.aspx).

A definition of “life scenario” would be: “*an unconscious life plan, emerging in childhood, strengthened by parents, justified by subsequent events and culminating with a destructive pattern in the rest of the adult life*” (Nuță, 2000).

There are cases when clients (especially pupils) experience conflicts peculiar to their age, with great emotional impact and negative consequences on school results. At school when there is available a team of specialists (doctors, psychologists and/or psychotherapists) what is usually chosen is psychodrama / sociodrama, for therapeutic purposes, playing on catharsis. Directly related to psychological counselling at this age it is worth considering “*demolishing the life scenario by an antidote*” (idem), with psycho-therapeutical assistance or intervention.

This aspect of “life scenario” must be “annihilated, demolished” by psychotherapists in awareness and replaced with a something beneficial for subsequent actions of the client, who will adopt a different life scenario, hopefully more constructive.

Strategic scenarios seek to eliminate randomness, and are based on:

- previous experience in leadership, built on “the lessons learned” in the past and a long managerial practice;
- determining factors that have remarkable influence over the future actions;
- objective laws, principles, rules, methods and procedures, normative systems based on which future actions can unfold in various ways;
- scientific methods to ground and verify hypotheses and alternatives throughout their preparation and elaboration.

Adolescents and young people often face difficulties in decision-making at the crossroads of their careers (at the end of a learning cycle or when finding employment). In such situations it is necessary to analyse premises (SWOT) and elaborate **strategic or anticipatory scenarios** of the type: SO, WO, ST, WT (see the article: **SWOT Analysis**).

These kind of scenarios are inspired by the military, and are considered qualitative methods used “for prognoses in the following situations:

- lack of statistical data on the evolution of certain phenomena or processes;
- insufficient security regarding the validity of past data, when available;
- uncertainty regarding the transposition into the future of the tendency resulting from past statistical data” (Joița, 2000).

Forecast, as a way of shaping the future, and defined as an instrument of prediction, is by nature intuitive and heuristic.

Under practical aspect, applicable to the scenario method as well, heuristics is:

- a class of methods and rules directing the human subject (in our previously mentioned case the planning analyst and decision maker) towards the most compatible solution with regard to the given situation, and the most economical solution to achieve the goals;
- a way of solving complex problems without oversimplification (www.actrus.ro/biblioteca/cursuri/management/stanciutele/a2.pdf).

From a temporal perspective, scenarios can be **longitudinal** or **transversal**.

Longitudinal scenarios describe the development of the phenomenon, from the present into the future. They try to seize a dynamic image (the movie) of the possible unfolding of the action, its evolution, the branching of chances, expectations. The structure is tree-like, with the possible alternatives leading to solving the situation.

Transversal scenarios seize the way reality is apparent at a certain time (e.g. by analysing transversally a situation common for certain categories of population or at the end of development cycles of phenomena or processes). They give the static image (photography) of the phenomenon or process in a key moment of its evolution in the form of spatial structures.

The stages of developing a scenario

In elaborating a scenario there are standard stages. Within each stage there are various steps according to the type and complexity of the scenario.

First stage: outlining the morphology of the system (by knowing the limits and influences of the external environment). Any scenario starts from the current state of the system (t_0) and sets a time interval for analysis (t_n). In order to investigate the transformation in this time period, we can choose several types of scenarios (normative, exploratory, tendency-based, contrastive, etc.). In addition, it is customary to express the desirability of the current state of the system as a value option for defining the evolution up to t_n .

Second stage: Defining endogenous and exogenous variables influencing the dynamics of the system under analysis.

Third stage: Elaborating the premises of the analysed model on the basis of hypotheses through which one can define how to reach a future state of the system, expressed in terms of value judgements regarding the desirability and normative principles.

Fourth stage: Elaborating the model for system evolution in time. In the construction of the model there can occur restrictions pertaining to the formal validity of the relations between components, avoiding errors of various approximations (phenomenological trends or extrapolations).

Final stage: Continuing the activity of developing the scenario, according to the type previously chosen and for the time initially set (Dictionary of sociology, 1993).

The stages mentioned are specific for anticipatory scenarios. Should we “agglutinate” several scenario models, we will obtain a more detailed construction pattern that has proved functional in career counselling as well; this will have in mind:

1. Defining the subject (event or action) to be written about.
2. Setting duration and purpose.
3. Identifying main characters.
4. Identifying tendencies and interacting factors.
5. Discovering aspects difficult to predict.
6. Selecting and grouping those forces and characters in opposition.
7. Identifying plausible extreme results (positive and negative).
8. Projecting possible scenarios.
9. Writing alternative scripts.
10. Evaluating scenarios.
11. Identifying additional investigation needs.
12. Identifying quantification and selection techniques for the decisive scenario from among several possible variants.

Structure and contents of a scenario

Any scenario recounts the logical moments of an action (the beginning, the middle and the end, or the introduction, the plot, and the conclusion) and will be structured in three acts (although atypical structures may exist):

Act I

- Initial state and preparation
- Topic and problem to solve
- Emergence of opportunity
- Choosing the solution
- Major challenge or change of plans

Act II

- Progress
- Symbolic scene

- Crossroads
- Deliberation
- Decision
- Complications
- Giving up – a new chance

Act III

- Final attempt
- Climax
- Outcome
- Ending

Target population

Scenarios can be developed with clients of any age. In order that their formative effect have a maximum impact, the scenarios must be chosen according to the age and particular situation of each client: simulative and transversal ones are more frequently used in secondary school and vocational school, while longitudinal, strategic and anticipatory, due to their being complex and laborious, are destined for the end of the study cycle (high school and university) and the beginning of employment or in special life situations (especially of adults).

Exercises, case studies, examples

As an example we offer a scenario for a commonly encountered situation: an interview for a position in a legal consulting company. The example combines the aspects of simulative, transversal, dramatic script with elements of strategy SO (*Strengths – Opportunities*) and at the end, with anticipatory offers.

The questions and answers of the subjects were selected from a series of real interviews and are considered “typical” and “ideal” for the position. Tricky questions (1-3, 7-8, 9-10) check each other out (honesty grid) and key moments (decisive for obtaining employment) are the answers provided to questions 8, 11, 14, 16, 18.

The duration of 41-61 minutes of the interview is longer than the real one (who lasts some 30 minutes) due to the large number of questions, out of which the interviewer selects the most significant.

Acts / Moments	Time (min.)	Interview questions / Answers	Tactical recommendations / operational suggestions
Preparation	1	1. Why do you wish to change your job?	
	1-2	<i>Legal consulting is what I have wanted to do since university. I gave up my old job because, even though the salary was good, I had no possibilities to put myself forward. The firm I used to work for was not large and I had no perspectives to perfect myself</i>	Punctuality Impeccable attire Civilized behaviour Etiquette
Location and circumstances	1	2. How did you find out about our intention to hire a person for the position ...?	
	1-2	<i>I periodically access your site for news and documentation for your clients. In fact I have also read the ad in ...</i>	Professional motivation Interest in the field
Main question	1	3. Why would you like to work for us?	
	1-2	<i>I have chosen your firm because it is the most respectable, considering the clients you have and the fact that, as apparent in your ad, you only hire legal consultants with remarkable performance</i>	Detailed knowledge of the activity of the firm and of rival firms
Topic	1	4. How did you choose your profession?	
	1-2	<i>The field attracted me since childhood. I benefited from the professional experience of my parents, the legal profession being a tradition in the family</i>	Honesty. Concise and direct answer
Opportunity	1	5. Have you had the same position or a similar one?	Experience in the field
	1-2	<i>Yes, in my former job, as I mentioned in my CV, I worked as an assistant legal consultant for 6 months</i>	Being acquainted with the work instruments
Choosing the solution	1	6. If you could go back in time, would you choose the same profession? Why?	Firmness
	1-2	<i>Certainly, since I am passionate about solving legal cases and assisting clients</i>	Argumentation
Major challenge	1	7. What are the aspects in your activity that you enjoy?	
	1-2	<i>Loyalty, rectitude, professional deontology and, why not, recognition of personal merit</i>	Precision, organization, honesty
Major challenge	1	8. What do you think are the individual qualities necessary for this activity?	

	1-2	<i>Organization, going strictly by the law, persuasion. I have noticed that people who seek legal advice wish for a quick and complete answer. This favours me since I am a dynamic and meticulous person</i>	Self-confidence Enumerating personal qualities required in the profession
Major challenge	1	9. What do you believe to be your strengths?	
	1-2	<i>I can learn very fast, which I can prove immediately, and, as is apparent in my CV, the grades and projects in university show my abilities in the field</i>	Strengths presented during the interview
Reversal of situation	1	10. What are the difficult aspects of your profession?	
	1-2	<i>The need to be permanently informed, work with difficult clients, emotional stress</i>	Realism Judgement
Crossroads	1	11. What do you consider to be your weaknesses?	
	1-2	<i>I am sometimes too impatient to do something and I dislike depending on others. But if I work in a team of professionals the "flaw" is not apparent</i>	Transparency Opportunities of development and improvement
Progress General purpose	1	12. How would you describe an ordinary day of work in your previous job?	
	1-2	<i>I usually had an 8-hours schedule with a lunch break. I used to meet with clients but I mostly helped draw up files for the senior partners</i>	Discipline and efficiency, regular hours
Symbolic schema	1	13. Please tell me of one of your achievements.	
	1-2	<i>I first learned legislation regarding the problems the client wished consultation for. One argument would be the high grades in university at the subjects directly connected to the field. Moreover, I bought software on the latest legal news this year</i>	Realizations can be proved. Their unostentatious enumeration will reflect security and knowing one's worth
Crucial moment, no turning back	1	14. Have you ever drawn up files to set up a business?	
	1-2	<i>Yes, I have often been requested to prepare such documents for entrepreneurial activities</i>	Experience in the activities of the employer's firm
Major setback	1	15. Can you work under stress?	
	1-2	<i>The capacity to focus and tolerance to frustration that I have practiced help me handle stress</i>	Emotional balance
Complications Greater challenge	1	16. What is money to you?	

	1-2	<i>A recompense for the work done and an adequate living standard</i>	Lucidity
Final attempt	1	17. What can you offer to our firm?	
	1-2	<i>Professionalism and loyalty.</i>	Confidentiality
Climax	1	18. Do you wish to continually improve in the profession?	
	1-2	<i>Yes, I try to keep in touch with updates in legislation. I have started with some international law, since I worked for foreign clients doing business in Romania</i>	Opportunities Initiative
Conclusion	1	19. What are your expectations relative to the future?	
	1-2	<i>For the time being I wish to advance in my career and start a family</i>	Wish to put one forward
Resolution	1	20. Is there anything in particular you would like to know about the position you are applying for or the firm?	
	1-2	<i>Yes, I would like to know if you offer specialized training programmes for your employees. I am interested in specialization in international environmental legislation</i>	Seriousness Responsibility
The hope of a new beginning	1	We do have such courses. We are glad to hear of your wishes, since last year we had few applicants although the field holds perspective	

Method evaluation

“A well directed movie with a good script is a guaranteed success” is a motto in the world of cinema that military strategy could transform by stating that “a war fought according to an accurate script is strategically half won”. As strategic plan of battle, scenario is considered “the winner’s secret weapon” – Alexander Macedon, “*une vision de maréchal*” – Napoleon, or “the pearl in the actor’s crown” – Lawrence Olivier (www.actrus.ro/biblioteca/cursuri/management/stanciutele/index.html).

Indeed, scenario stands on top of the list of instruments used by older and more recent strategic arts and sciences with an ambition to foresee the future.

Through its role, the scenario technique is part of complex methods, “weighty” for strategy and prognosis. In the process of applying it, scenario is preceded by the need analysis (SWOT, PEST), followed by scenic and strategic-operational manifestations (simulation, drama, role-play, etc.).

The connection between these three categories of methods is indestructible and reciprocally conditioned. The cause-effect chain in the triad is maintained in their assessment as well, the advantages / disadvantages passed from one to the other.

Advantages:

- prevents failure, reduces risks and random future events;
- offers an overall (bird's eye) view of events, directing towards the solution of the client's problem;
- anticipates vocational success by practicing occupational roles;
- develops creative imagination, and analysis and synthesis capacity;
- practices the mechanisms of heuristic and strategic thinking;
- develops intuition, decision making, prediction, and conflict solving;
- cultivates artistic aptitudes, emotional balance, and self-discipline;
- socializes, corrects behavioural disorders and emotional tensions;
- develops managerial capacities, and spatial and temporal orientation;
- helps counsellors estimate in a realistic manner the client's chances or vulnerable points.

Disadvantages:

- requires long documentation and elaboration;
- plays on previous experience and managerial capacities of the counsellor;
- amplifies stress and fear of failure by its anticipatory nature, especially in case of nervous clients;
- asks for specialized psycho-therapeutical assistance in severe cases of compulsive negative liberation triggered by the role-play.

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Role-play

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History

Role-play originates in *psychodrama*, created for therapeutic purposes by J. L. Moreno (1892-1974), American psycho-sociologist of Romanian origin. Moreno created “the improvisation theatre” in 1921 and is the author of *Who will survive?* (1934), *Psychodrama*, vol. 1 (1946), *The theatre of spontaneity* (1947), *Group psychotherapy and psychodrama* (1965).

Theoretical background

Moreno’s theory is based on the idea that every person has a creative potential, and psychodrama favours its discovery and activation. With its creative possibilities based on a play, psychodrama sets the conditions for evoking and experimenting with life situations with a view to opening new perspectives in self-knowledge and development.

Psychodrama is currently used as clinical intervention and preventive therapy, supportive in crisis situations. Of the *principles* psychodrama is based on, we mention:

- constructing a therapeutic situation that should integrate all means of life and existence, beginning with the universal ones (time, space, reality, cosmos) and down to the details of personal life;

- call for action, movement;
- experiencing the therapeutic experience in the present, “here and now”.

The techniques used in psychodrama are:

- role reversal;
- therapeutic soliloquy;
- role-play;
- spontaneous improvisation.

If in psychodrama the human subjects play their own role, their own existential experience (unburdening emotions, tensions, becoming aware of behaviours), in *role-play* the involvement of the “actor” targets understanding and learning new social roles, becoming aware of the difficulties in new relationships, practicing spontaneity and social adaptability. Moreno used role-play as an experimental method, for diagnosis, quantitative and qualitative assessment of behaviours and as a therapeutic method to improve the relationships and increase the adaptability to social life.

Zlate (1982) approach role-play as “group activation method”, and includes it, alongside case studies and training or practicum groups, into the category of group problem analysis stimulation methods. Role-play is a psychological or psychosocial training method for the members of a group, with applications in various fields: education, industry, commerce, law, medicine, organizational and enterprise management, ecclesiastic professions. For example, in commerce it can be used in order to develop the ability of sales people to improve customer relations, or in education to socialize pupils, group integration, developing positive behaviours or moral qualities. Holdevici (1998) mentions an educational significance of role-play in psychotherapy, used to facilitate self-understanding, develop certain abilities, analyse or prove behaviour functioning. The author identifies a series of *functions* of drama play in psychotherapy: *psycho-diagnostic method*, allowing for obtaining information on the nature or severity of the client’s problem; *instruction method*, enhancing the learning of how to approach certain situations; *training*, supporting *insights* regarding the self, knowledge / control of feelings, developing certain abilities to cope with life problems.

Method presentation

Role-play is a method of simulating reality through play, without consequences in reality, offering the “players” the possibility to play certain parts or practice certain behaviours and/or abilities. The method presupposes establishing interpersonal relationships of reciprocity, adaptation to the behaviours of role-play partners in order to attain the goals set, developing empathy by understanding other people, sometimes by putting oneself in “their shoes”.

The method is attractive due to its playful content, efficient due to the depth of the intervention, and can be used in individual and group counselling. In the first instance different roles will be played in succession (e.g. professions) or the same role in different situations / contexts. Used in groups, the method favours social learning that leads to changes in attitude and behaviour of the participants.

Role-play can be used by itself or associated with other methods: case study, debate, group discussion, occupational profile analysis.

Classification

The main *forms* of role-play are (Zlate, M.: Zlate, C., 1982):

- *play based on a given role*, following a scenario, including two parts: presentation of the situation / topic and the scenario itself;
- *play based on an improvised role*, created by the person playing the part with vague information on the character to be interpreted, “the actors” will perform the role by the tips given, the personal style, the global evolution of the situation, and in case of unexpected events they are told to behave as they would in a real life situation. This type of play involves on the part of actors spontaneity and creativity;
- *play based on mixed roles*, passing from scenario to improvisation; role-play based on scenario would be continued with role improvisation for finding solutions;
- *play based on role reversal* takes place when two people in conflict or in opposition switch places (Feltham; Dryden, 1993). As a consequence, one better understands the inner life of the other, how one’s own reactions can be brought to the attention of another person, involvement in various interpersonal exchanges is practiced. For example, in rational emotive therapy – RET, there is the “*rational role reversal*”, situation in which the client play the role of the counsellor and analyses irrational beliefs that cause dysfunctional behaviours, expressed by the counsellor, who takes the position of the client.

Gugel (2002) classifies role-play based on the degree of structuring. The author identifies:

- *Spontaneous role-play*, including few prescriptions, and in which the participants have much room for self-expression; roles are played completely individually; this type of role-play uses the following means:
 - *prompted role-play*: presupposes the intervention of the moderator to stimulate participation, creativity in the participants,

- *surprise role-play*: the moderator or a participant previously instructed intervenes throughout the play with a surprise impulse, so as not to disturb the unfolding of the play, but also to stimulate spontaneity in participants;
- *Structured role-play* implies the precise and clear statement of the play situation, with room for spontaneity; includes the analysis of the initial situation and of the roles played. It can be:
 - *partners role-play* (dyad),
 - *group role-play* (e.g. conflictual roles between groups);
- *Holistic role-play* is performed with the entire group (no observers) and includes: direct approach (no preparation) of the play situation, carrying out the action in context, improvisation within the play (the main roles are assigned, and the supporting ones presuppose a higher degree of spontaneity); roles are collective, the play leader has the main part, to organize and stimulate the participation of the others.

The stages of role-play

Role-play follows the stages below:

- *counsellor / moderator describing the topic, situation proposed*. In this stage are introduced the setting, location, time, conditions, aims, scenario, status and role, relationship between the characters involved;
- *motivating the participants, warming up or icebreaking* in order to accept and involve in the role-play, triggering positive attitudes. The moderator intervenes in order to get the interest of the participants by showing the benefits of the method proposed, and also in order to obtain their agreement to taking part in the activity. Actors and observers volunteer or are appointed to the roles;
- *casting* (actors, observers, possibly extras) and handing out charts to every participant with a description of the situation, role, behaviour to be adopted, setting the stage, instructing the observers regarding the aspects to be watched. It is important that roles are connected with the life of the participants and their previous experience for a better transposition into the proposed situations. Actors can play the part of significant people in their lives or even their own role in different situations. Charts will include: the name, occupation, image, important data for the role (age, marital status, children, etc.), biographical data (an abbreviated CV), information on the context of the role;

- *the unfolding of the role-play.* Playing the role requires spontaneity and creativity on the part of the participants. The duration of the play varies with content of the situation and with the improvisation skills of the actors;
- *analysis of the role-play, of how roles were approached,* theoretical analysis (reflection stage), evaluating the roles played, interviewing the actors. There is reflection, self-assessment, introspection, analysis of the decisions and actions made during the play. At the end there are discussions with the actors on how they felt, their intentions or justification of behaviours, and with observers discussions on what elements were remarked during the activity. The analysis will evince aspects such as: *group dynamics* (interactions, relationships between group members, difficulties met and solutions found), *roles played* (originality, improvisation, identifying elements peculiar to each role, proposing other possible means of performance), efficiency of the interactions between participants (identifying adequate solutions). Role-play can be taken up in other contexts as well (distancing). To assess the performance of the role, the following question categories can be used:
 - regarding the roles: *how did the actors behave (facial expressions, gestures, language)? How was played the role (with involvement, detachment)? How did the actors feel as characters?*
 - within the group: *what did the play mean to the group? What were the consequences for the cooperation and climate in the group?*
 - within situations: *which of the aims set have been fulfilled? What alternatives / solutions could have been chosen?*

Alternatively, it is possible to complete sentences of the type:

I have chosen the part since it allows me to

The role is important to me because

Which role do you consider useful to be developed in the future

Identify the competences, aptitudes necessary in performing a role

The role of the counsellor / moderator

The moderator will have to prove ability, flexibility and tact in coordinating the role-play, insisting on the following aspects: motivating the participants, giving support to avoid situations that might be generated by the actors being hesitant or excessively emotional involvement. *The means* of intervention refer to: role reversal, pauses for reflection on one's own behaviour, a group member assisting each actor by advice, encouragement, improvising perturbing incidents during the play, moderating and animating the play, discussions for achieving the goal, respecting the topic and stages of the method.

Target population

In career counselling, role-play will be adapted to the needs of the *beneficiaries*:

- *pupils* will become acquainted with the specificity of professions by playing certain professional parts in order to discover the reality of the adult world in a fun and simulative learning context; it can be associated with group discussions, informative leaflets, video tapes or occupational profiles, etc.;
- in *adult* counselling, role-play can be used in: practicing interviews, negotiating a salary, finding a job, balancing family budget;
- in *counsellor* training, role-play helps practicing behaviours, developing communication skills, stimulating counselling situations.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Pupil counselling:

1. Role-play with the topic *school options of 8th grade pupils*.

Unfolding:

- reuniting class board at the end of the first semester of the 8th grade with a view to *discussing educational / professional options* and give recommendations or make additional proposals;
- *the characters* proposed are: school counsellor (1), class teachers (10), parent representatives (2), pupil representatives (2), observers;
- *cards* will be handed out with information on: the school situation of the pupil (for all participants), a chart with the pupil's options (for the class master), counselling / guidance chart (for the counsellor), information chart on family (for parent representatives), a chart with the pupil's characterization made by colleagues (for pupils' representatives), observation chart (for each observer);
- several cases will be discussed, a good opportunity for each pupil to reflect on his/her own situation (matching possibilities with aspirations).

Observation chart – Example

Intervention person	No. of interventions	Observations: type of intervention, attitude, means of non-verbal communication
School counsellor		
Parent representatives		
Pupil representatives		
Maternal language teacher		
Mathematics teacher		
History / geography teacher		
Physics / chemistry teacher		
Music teacher		

2. Prepare a list of questions for an interview with a specialist in a certain field (e.g. commerce, law, medicine), using the occupational profiles and videotapes on professions. Create a role-play on the topic: *meeting between pupils and a specialist*; the characters proposed: specialist, pupils, observers.

The list will contain questions such as:

What does the profession ... mean?

What training and what personal qualities are necessary?

In what environment do you work and what is your working hours?

What reasons made you choose this profession?

What were the most important satisfactions over the years?

What were the unpleasant issues for?

3. Role-play on *choosing high school / university*; the characters proposed are: pupil, parents, school counsellor. The situation in which the pupil's choice is different from the parents' will be discussed and solutions found.

4. Imagine you are the human resource manager of a company. You must prepare an employee who will soon be fired because of the economic situation of the company. Keep in mind that the employee is very well trained but you have to let him or her go. *Roles* proposed: manager, employee, observers.

Career counsellor training:

1. Design the first interview of an unemployed client who comes to the career counselling centre. Play the following parts: counsellor, client, observers.

2. Solve the following situation: you are a counsellor and your client overwhelms you with attention. By using the formula I... explain in a polite but firm tone that you wish to maintain a professional relationship. Insist on:

- clarifying the situation, without criticism of someone else's behaviour;
- presenting in a non-diminishing light the consequences for himself/herself;
- describing feelings in a positive manner;
- stating one's own aims and needs;
- changing the perspective: approaching the situation from the point of view of the counsellor.

Proposed roles: counsellor, client, observers.

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- ensures *additional information* to the one obtained by initial assessment and allows *problem identification*;
- presupposes a higher degree of involvement on the part of people targeted by *practicing roles* useful in social and professional life; in case of in training it allows the simulation of situations which subjects will confront on the job;
- contributes to *changes in negative behaviours* and *developing new useful behaviours*, necessary to fulfil future professional roles or responsibilities;
- it is a means of developing spontaneity, initiative, creativity, responsibility, capacity to face conflicts, and contributes to shaping moral qualities such as: patience, perseverance, self-control, respect for the others;
- favours the practice of problem solving, situations that require experimenting alternative strategies or adopting optimal career-related decisions.

At the same time, using role-play within *group* contributes to:

- improving inter-human relationships, facilitate socialization and reciprocal adaptation of group members;
- developing cooperation and group cohesion;
- stimulating, encouraging the participation of timid clients;

- active participation in discussions, learning group behaviour of identifying phenomena specific to the group dynamics;
- proposing solutions to overcome difficulties or conflicts within the group.

Disadvantages:

- it may encourage ostentatious attitudes, “show” to the detriment of originality;
- some participants can be hesitant, inhibited, fearful of exposure, ridicule, being addressed by others;
- rigid roles or severity of moderator may block the spontaneity on the part of the actors;
- it requires much time to prepare and carry out;
- lack of explanations in the beginning and inadequacy of the topic as regards the age and concerns of participants can cause confusion, disorganization, and disappointment.

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Simulation

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History

Inspired from the natural human tendency to imitate, simulation has been known as an educational method since ancient times, having been used successfully by Plato, Socrates and Aristotle.

Mediaeval and Renaissance pedagogy develops simulative methods (modelling, imitation and simulation, role-play and reconstruction) both in teaching and learning stimulation.

In the past century took place an individualization of methods based on simulation, due to the development of the mathematical theory of models, strategic games, and decision-making simulations. In the mid 1960s it began an intense movement to use programmed simulation games in education and social sciences. The first computer simulation game appeared in the United States in 1955 (called *Monopologs*), it belonging to the *Rand US Air Force Corporation* and destined for the strategic training of military. The movement extends over to Europe in the next decade, then it becomes internationally widespread. In 1970 the International Simulation and Gaming Association is created, and a rich literature is written investigating the multitude of simulation programmes successfully used in all fields. At the end of the 1980s there were already 12 periodicals on the subject and over 7000 computer simulation games.

Currently, simulative programmes are almost indispensable to any educational process (classical or computer-based) and their efficiency in activating and motivating pupils is unanimously recognized.

Progress without precedent in research and innovation has turned simulation and game software (in business, management, marketing, education) into a global industry for

various markets. Every year there are tens of national and international scientific events (seminars, conferences, exhibitions, fairs) dedicated to the phenomenon that is generically called **simulative model**.

Theoretical background

Starting from the Latin "*simulare*" (hide), the term has today a multitude of meanings. According to context, the act of simulation presupposes imitation, pretence, counterfeit, reproduction, modelling, claim, reconstruction, and false appearance. Hence the development of method variants and levels of understanding: iconic, symbolic, formalized.

Iconic simulation is most widespread in social sciences, based on the common, descriptive level of knowledge, is presented as simulation games in which relationships or processes specific to groups, organizations or communities are represented by analogy.

Symbolic simulation is a continuation of the iconic simulation, consisting of the computer reproduction of dense international networks and systems of social interactions for prospective and evaluation purposes.

Formalized simulation studies interactively the system simulated in a formal, logical or mathematical system, in a stochastic or determinist version.

The characteristics of simulation can be better seized if we analyse the versions used for the levels mentioned:

- it is a technique of reality exploration based on analogy or modelling;
- it studies phenomena, relations and processes with a high degree of complexity;
- it may have a playful, experimental or provisional, strategic nature;
- it serves to explain abstract notions and theories;
- it is a heuristic strategy;
- it leads to the discovery of new knowledge, logical and causal relationships between already existing knowledge;
- it consolidates and develops the oral expression skills;
- it allows feedback regarding the consequences of certain actions;
- it is a means of modelling thought, and developing decision-making capacity, imagination, creativity.

Simulation tends to become "... *one of the strongest quasi-experimental research technique in social sciences. The main validity criteria of application consist in achieving*

isomorphism among the variables of the real system and those involved in the construction of the model. Simulation is not only a method of analysis but even a new and productive direction of development in the research of complex systems” (Vlăsceanu, 1993).

Method presentation

On the basis of the attributes mentioned, simulation could be defined as a means of reproducing or reconstructing the reality by substituting it with an analogical model for learning, study, experimental investigation or research.

Simulation is not however limited to imitation or reproduction of real systems, but introduces strategic simplifications in the real system composition in order to stress representatives characteristics or relations.

Although simulation has an artificial structure, it retains a series of real elements that cannot be found in a simple exposition. Direct involvement of participants in simulated situations and circumstances can take varied forms: didactic or educational games, simulation games, learning through drama, learning with simulators, practicing real parts (Cerghit, 1997).

There are common elements between simulation and other methods used in guidance and counselling. For example, playing a part is present in role-play, simulation games, and drama. But in role-play what is most important is the role (fictional, imaginary) and its learning / playing, while for simulation the participant is asked both to play the part (real), and to reconstruct / anticipate real facts or events (past, present or future). The heuristic and creative nature of simulation determines the actor to take on responsibility, attitudes and decisions with regard to the real problems. Role-play or drama require the actors to play parts that is foreign to them and often with no correspondence in reality, and without requiring intervention to solve the real problem.

Applying the method requires a well-trained counsellor, knowledge of the client and exact setting of the “steps” for playing the parts. The project or scenario must be carefully analysed in order to be as “realistic” as possible.

Under any of its forms (simulation, didactic simulator, reconstruction) applying the method goes through the standard stages and, played by strict rules, ensures the success of solving the conflict / problem.

Counsellors must go through the following steps in organizing simulations:

- elaborating the project / scenario of simulation;
- chooses and motivates the players;

- prepares the adequate conditions and environment;
- clarifies objectives and benefits for the actors;
- coordinates the unfolding of the simulation activity;
- analyses the activity upon its closure;
- assesses all elements involved: characters (actors, observers), parts, relationships, mounting and solving the conflict (problem), duration, discussions and reflection on the decisions reached.

Target population

Using simulation is beneficial for all clients of information, counselling and guidance services: pupils, young graduates of various educational levels, adults.

Exercises, case studies, examples

For the classic version of the method we have chosen an application of occupational simulation (trial in court) successfully used with law students, but also with pupils who aspire to become lawyers. The scenario is also used in correctional environments to recuperate people with deviant behaviours.

Trial simulation in court

Simulating a trial has proved to be one of the most efficient methods to learn some basic notions of the legal system. This allows pupils to interpret all the roles involved in the legal system, from clerk and judge, to witness and prosecutor. Pupils acquire an intrinsic perspective, since they learn these parts by practicing them.

Trial simulations can turn into competitions where groups of pupils representing schools or other organizations compete against each other. These competitions are similar to sport ones, except that pupils learn laws and legal procedures by playing various parts. Pupils are scored based on their performance, often by real judges and lawyers.

a. What is the trial simulation?

The simulation of a trial represents the imitation of a legal session that can be based on a hypothetical or a real case. Given the objectives of the counsellor, trial simulations may be formal or informal, whole or sections of the whole, with more or fewer participants.

Trial simulation offers participants an understanding of the legal procedures based on experience.

The concept of trial simulation, as a mechanism for understanding the process of solving disputes in a court of law, must be well delivered to the pupils. The counsellor must explain them how a conflict is brought before justice (e.g. in a criminal case the roles of police, investigation officer, prosecutor, and judge will be explained).

Pupils should also understand:

- the roles of all other actors: lawyers, witnesses, and the two parties;
- the content of the debates, what every person involved in the process must prove, the number and consistency of the necessary evidence.

In a trial simulation it is attempted to involve as many participants as possible, the whole activity only being to imitate what goes on in a courtroom. Since the aim is to involve various participants, unlike real cases, the trial simulation allows the existence of several judges, prosecutors, and lawyers. This version of the method can be used to instruct law students, pupils, the uninitiated, and requires a minimum of four hours: three to inform the participants on the legal procedure, evidence, relevant facts, the applicable law and procedural law, and one hour for the trial itself. A single day may therefore be sufficient, with the instruction in the morning and the trial in the afternoon. Or alternatively, six lessons of 40 minutes each.

Generally, criminal cases are preferred because the preliminaries of the trial can be carried out before the trial begins, and the questions regarding the crime and its impact on society lead to challenging discussions.

b. The results of a trial simulation

Throughout the trial simulation pupils learn how to analyse facts, identify relevant laws for the case, acquire skills of critical thinking, enrich their vocabulary and thinking, develop listening skills, question asking skills, and oral presentation of a problem. They also learn how to develop an argument from a legal point of view, prepare and organize the necessary materials. By performing and observing the roles of people involved in a trial (lawyers, witnesses, and clients), pupils get the inside perspective on the functioning of a court of law.

At the end of the trial simulation, pupils will be able to:

- define in personal terms what the trial simulation is;
- describe the different trial simulation types;
- explain the stages of an investigation taking place before the trial;
- identify the stages of trial simulation;

- describe the roles of prosecution and defence;
- describe the way lawyers and prosecutors prepare their case;
- explain the way judges decide on verdict;
- ask questions and find arguments to support the points of view of both parties;
- ask questions as judges.

c. Investigations prior to the trial

In criminal cases the preliminaries of the trial may be divided into four phases:

- the role of the police;
- the role of the investigator;
- the role of the prosecutor;
- the role of the judge.

Each phase is about to be described in brief.

d. The stages of trial simulation

Normally, in trial simulations pupils are first presented with the phases.

Many questions asked by the judge, prosecutor, and lawyer for the defence often try to clarify the ambiguities and contradictions in the statements so as to determine whether witnesses are reliable or not. This task has largely been done by the investigator, prosecutor, and judge in the preliminaries of the trial.

Identifying facts

In order to make sure that pupils have understood what happened in a certain case, they should receive a set of information regarding the trial simulation containing the indictment, an abstract of what happened, of the law, the list of witnesses and their statements. Each pupil should be asked to read the indictment, the abstract of the most important facts, and the individual statements of the witnesses of both parties involved in the trial. Then the counsellor should detail each of them so that pupils understand what happened before explaining the law relevant to the case.

Identifying the law

The stress is laid on respecting or breaking the provisions of the Criminal Code. The relevant articles in the Code must be explained to the pupils. The kind of evidence that the prosecutor must present to the judge so as to prove the suspect guilty will be discussed with the pupils. Further on, attention must be paid to the evidence that can be used by the defence.

Dividing into groups

Trial simulation must be conceived so as to involve as many pupils as possible in the preparation and carrying out. This is accomplished by ensuring that every participant understands the facts and the law, which must be identified both by the prosecution and the defence. Then groups of prosecutors, lawyers for the defence, and judges receive the fundamental information to prepare their questions, arguments, verdicts. The best way to do this is by asking participants to identify the aspects of each statement that can be used either by the prosecution or the defence, then write them down for further use in elaborating the questions, arguments, verdicts.

Participants may be divided into four teams: witnesses, judges, prosecutors, and defence. Parts can be distributed for other actors involved in the trial: the bailiff (the person introducing witnesses into the courtroom), or the secretary for the judge (the person handing pieces of the file to the judge).

Each team can have other members who can help formulate questions – with different roles in testing questions – and elaborate the closing argument. In case the teams agree, these extra members could play the role of bailiff or keep track of the time spent on each activity. Whoever does not have the opportunity of taking part in the simulation can play the part of reporters or observers (audience, press).

Preparing questions and arguments for the role-play

Participants should work in teams to prepare the questions that each designated person will have to ask the defendant or the witnesses. Prosecutors and lawyers for the defence must assist those team members that have been assigned to make the opening and closing arguments. Judges have to prepare the questions for the defendant and the witnesses, while another judge will have to give the verdict.

Once the participants are ready, the trial simulation should not last more than an hour. This is ensured by setting a strict timing for each participant.

Instructions for the president of the court, the secretary for the judge, and the bailiff

The president of the court, the secretary for the judge, and the bailiff must receive instructions so as to be properly acquainted with their parts.

Trial simulation

The stages of a trial simulation must be explained and handed to the participants in the form of a written text, before the simulation begins.

The room should be similar to a courtroom: the desk of the judge placed by the front wall, in the middle; the bailiff and the secretary for the judge sit behind the desk in front of the judge; the witness box to the right of the judge; the defendant next to the defence team behind a desk in front of the judge, to the right; and the audience behind the prosecution and the defence teams.

The secretary should assist the judge, the prosecutor and the lawyers by indicating how long they have left after each stage of the trial. For example, the timing to:

- the judge verifying the presence of all parties involved and opening the trial;
- the judge who asks the prosecutor to read the indictment and read the rights to the defendant;
- the defendant making an opening statement;
- the judges interrogating the defendant and the witnesses;
- the prosecutors interrogating the defendant and the witnesses;
- the lawyers for the defence interrogating the defendant and the witnesses;
- the prosecutor, the lawyer and the defendant for making their closing arguments;
- the judge giving the sentence.

e. Evaluating the trial simulation

At the end of the trial simulation there should be time left to evaluate, preferably right after the sentence or at least in a subsequent session. Participants should be encouraged to express their points of view on the court sentence, the way prosecutors and lawyers delivered the evidence, the behaviour of the witnesses, and their own feelings in playing various parts.

As previously mentioned, the objective of a trial simulation is to offer participants and observers a better understanding of the functioning of the legal process, and to practice responsibilities.

Method evaluation

Simulation is one of the methods whose beneficiaries can be both counsellors and clients.

In its classical variant the method is used to anticipate the unfolding of an interview, for written or oral examinations in view of admission into an educational cycle, to make career-related decisions (e.g. implementing a plan of action). Counsellors may practice or reconstruct a counselling session, aiming to develop their communication skills with various categories of clients.

Most useful for learning prove to be the simulations of occupational situations (transposing into the specificity of the profession by key tasks), negotiation, management and marketing techniques, decision-making, provisional games.

Advantages:

Experts in education (and not only) admit to the positive effects of simulation in training, guidance, and counselling, which justifies the expansion of the method as "learning and simulating games" software.

Through its complexity, the simulation reunites the advantages of classical information methods and those of discovery and communication, and especially game and drama play, that is:

- offers concentrated global information for problem solving;
- it is a stimulating and motivating method because it satisfies the immediate and foreseeable needs of the beneficiary starting from a very concrete level up to highly abstract formalizations;
- activates the participants involved in real roles that they internalise;
- "presents the advantage of active participation of the entire group, contributes to the lifelong training of educational actors" (Văideanu, 1979);
- anticipates vocational success by practicing the occupational role;
- develops communication, inter-relating, emotion and feeling control skills;
- requires presence of mind and initiative in critical situations, socializes by developing the team spirit;
- models thinking, develops the creative imagination and decision-making capacity;
- creates patterns to explore, investigate, and even hypotheses experimentation;
- develops management capacities and provisional strategies, practices negotiation and conflict solving skills;
- requires discipline, conformity to previously decided upon plans and scenarios.

Disadvantages:

- simulation being a complex method, the time for preparing the scenario and carrying it out the simulation is very long;
- requires particular effort on the part of beneficiaries, and previous experience / training on the part of the counsellor;
- emotional involvement, and stress or fear of failure in case of vulnerable clients;
- through its catharsis effect it can generate unexpected emotional outburst, which calls for immediate therapeutic intervention;
- some simulation software leads to addiction, especially in puberty or adolescence.

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Personal Project

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History

W. E. Kilpatrick (1870-1965) introduced the project method in 1918, as a pedagogical initiative to erase the rigid boundaries between the academic subjects (compartmentalised curriculum) and bring pupils closer to the real life. The background in Kilpatrick's theory on the formative role of the project method can be found in Dewey and the philosophy of progressive education in the first half of the 20th century. The central idea is that "we learn what we live" (Beineke, 1998), and the final goal is achievement of democracy and a good character. Pupils' interest in learning is stimulated by valuable goals in social situations that induce confidence, initiative, cooperation, and for attainment of which teachers must create conditions of interaction with colleagues, parents, and society. Any purpose-oriented action qualifies as a "project".

There are claims that Kilpatrick was not the first to have defined the method. Knoll (1997) synthesises American references that place the agricultural expert Stimson with his concept of "home project plan" ten years earlier. The Germans mention Richards and Dewey in 1900 with "arts and crafts programmes". Recent research (idem) shows that the project's origins go back to the end of the 16th century in the Italian architectural and engineering arts.

In the 1970s the project method witnessed a revival especially in northern and central Europe. No few ideologies in education (e.g. the movement for community education, open curriculum, practical learning) claim to have sprung from the progressive education method and the psychological approach of "project-based learning". Overseas, the project

was being used at the time in the initial vocational training of pupils, within the constructivist approach, investigation-based learning, problem solving.

Theoretical background

The personal project is a long-term method whose effects are noticeable, measurable, and appreciable not only in the individual existential schema, but also by the complexity of the external resources employed and the durability of the changes occurred. The personal project involves forecast and application of an articulated and targeted set of interventions, based on a philosophy capitalizing on the unlimited capacity for success and the positive meaning of change.

The project designates both the essence of a beginning (idea, draft), and the process that gives it continuity and transforms it into reality. When the product is yielded, the nature of the procedure changes retrospectively from “project” to “action plan” or “applied strategy”. Many times, the end result of the personal project does not remain constant, but it undergoes changes in shape, magnitude, depth, approach. These parameters are up to the human subject involved, who must seize the need and/or possibility of adjusting the personal project to the specific factors of the life situation.

Counsellors are in the privileged position of preparing the clients’ favourable mental setting for personal projects, and of contributing to the resource activation and rally. Everyone has a style of understanding, reacting to, and integrating their own life situations. Based on the previous experiences and expectations, it is possible to attach unique value to moments and capitalize on their growth potential. As for the clients unaware that inaction is also a statement of position, the counsellor helps them explore valid options and chances of success. For those with a clear image of the end result, the counsellor offers means of “reaching to the destination”. With clients exclusively interested in method, the counsellor works on clarifying perspective and evaluating consequences. What is essential is action, focused and trusting attempt, assisted efforts, and making experiences worthy.

Compiling a personal project is the equivalent of signing a contract with one’s self, by which the subject dedicates oneself to achieving the stated purposes. By this reasoning, Feller (1984) developed the concept of “job-search agreement” in order to help people in search of vacant positions but who after a while feel exhausted for a variety of motives. According to the agreement, clients have to answer “truly” all statements in the contract, and then behave accordingly. They end up thus owing to themselves to internalise those values (e.g. self-confidence, restricting expenses, promoting one’s abilities, investing in physical and mental health, positive thinking, feelings and behaviours), which helped in the long run to optimise the subjects’ market conduct and increase their chances of success.

Psychologically, there is a similar explanation of unexpected behaviours on the part of people who, for instance, have never up to that point proved career planning antecedents or predisposition, nor related features such as organization, ambition, goal orientation. Aronson (2004) uses the associated terms “*external justification*” and “*internal justification*”.

The external justification is the pressure put by the group or the situation and consequently one complies with the course imposed, often without any devotion to the cause (e.g. “if my friends feel the same way about the recruitment policy of the employer I wish to apply for a position with, they will bombard me with examples and conclusions I cannot fight, because I have no counter-examples, only the hope that my case will be different”).

The internal justification is the process by which one is in a situation to change his/her standpoint or declare the contrary of what he/she usually says for apparently no reason (e.g. “I have so far thought that a respectable position in the firm will make me liked by my collaborators; now I am saying that my position only ensures me a good income and I should have not expected unconditioned friendship my from workmates”). Later on, in order to maintain credibility, one finds arguments to support the new standpoint and turns into a passionate defender of it. Personal project may not be everyone’s dream, but once the premises have been created, it is difficult to be a simple bystander in other people’s projects.

The conceptual framework for the project activity is career planning. The complementary terms to define the semantic territory of counselling are: *strategy*, *tactics*, *logistics*. According to Egan (1998), strategy is a practical plan to attain goals. Tactics is the art to adapt the strategy to the concrete situation (including changing the plan on the spot and deal with unexpected complications), and logistics is the art to ensure all necessary resources when needed. We can safely say that the project includes aspects of all three categories mentioned above and confers unity, direction, and personal representation to each.

Method presentation

The personal project is not a method originally belonging to counselling. Comparable to the case study and the experiment in natural sciences – but differing by being neither empirical nor hermeneutical, and involving construction – the project has been introduced in the curriculum with the professionalisation of occupations.

Knoll’s study reveals two historic models of applying the project method, still valid today in refined forms: the first (represented by Woodward, 1887) is that pupils learn during school the skills and knowledge they then use independently and creatively in practical projects; the second (represented by Richards, 1900) does not precede but integrates the project, according to the idea that if we aim valuable interests and acquisitions, we must follow the “*natural wholes*”.

There are numerous sectors promoting personal project as an answer to the uniform requirements of the system. For example, we encounter the personal project in the customer relation policy of companies marketing their own products, and that name so the online form for ensuring customer loyalty.

We encounter the project method in formal and non-formal education, as part of a didactic style targeting individualization of learning. By case, the project may be assumed by a group or may contain individual complementary tasks that are complementary for the members of a team.

A personal project in counselling is defined through a tentative structure, and equally through the style and degree of achievement of its reference points. The main fields of personal project analysis are:

- Finality:
 - goal definition
 - goal particularization to the context of application
 - magnitude of change
- Process:
 - available resources
 - calendar
 - personal and social effects
 - alternative plans
- Assessment:
 - progress assessment
 - final assessment
 - success recognition

The personal project is an individual plan for career development. Any investment in becoming aware of, assuming, improving and personalizing one's career represents a gain in itself for the subjects, and it is why more than one measurement unit such as: accepted / rejected, fulfilled / unfulfilled can be applied to personal projects.

Target population

Personal project can be used in counselling pupils in all types of schools, university students, graduates in search of a job, adults who re-enter the labour market or want to change jobs.

Examples, case studies, exercises

Example

The personal project should be used with the following counselling prototypes:

1. Inert client, hesitant regarding action, for one of the reasons:

Passivity (does nothing, accepts without objection goals and proposals of others, paralysed initiative, violent). In this case, inactivity or postponement with regard to petty things can accumulate as irretrievable loss of favourable opportunity (Schiff, 1975).

“Learned helplessness”, concept used by Seligman (1975) in the context of the depression syndrome, with various levels of intensity (from light helplessness when the person does not feel up to something in particular, to the feeling of complete helplessness associated with deep depression). Bennet and Bennet (1984) have detected the positive side of helplessness by observing that if one cannot control a certain situation, there is not point in creating him/her any illusions about the contrary, assigning responsibilities and causing exaggerated expectations. What is important is to teach the client to distinguish between what it can or cannot be controlled, view helplessness from another angle, and set reasonable goals.

Disarming monologue. On occasion it is the client who seeks arguments to persuade himself/herself on why cannot or should not do a certain thing: “*I am not ready*”, “*I do not fit the requirements*”, “*it is too hard*”, “*it can’t work*”. Discouraging conversations with the self are well known to undermine the plan from the very beginning and cancel any chance of activity.

Circular argument. A person who did not get what has wished for may fall victim to guilt, which generates other negative behaviours and attracts failure (Pyszczyński; Greenberg, 1987).

Disorganization. A certain disorganization in minor aspects of life is given as justification for not getting involved in real challenges (Ferguson, 1987).

2. Client with entropic tendencies. Entropy is a natural tendency that is educated mainly through practice and autonomous will, and also with the aid of significant people. Since it cannot be changed on request, the client and the counsellor must not waste time by dwelling on the reason, but find ways to attain a result under the given circumstances. Many plans that start out with enthusiasm are abandoned in the face of obstacles or other priorities. Brownell et al. (1986) draw attention to the fine difference between

“preparing clients for mistakes” and “giving them permission to make mistakes”. This can be translated into the dichotomy: *“make reasonable errors” and “persist in or capitalizing on error”.*

3. Client who consciously chooses not to change, with an obvious capacity of self-analysis, can identify the problem and the factors susceptible to change, however realize and decide that the “price” is too high or would affect other aspects of his/her life.

Case study¹⁵

“Frank is the vice-president of a corporation. He is someone who knows what he wants and quickly went up the hierarchy. The president of the company, Vince, is near retirement and all things point to Frank being “the inheritor”. Here is the key: Vince is not only an excellent manager, but a true leader; he knows what the company can and should become in the next 5-10 years, communicates well with his employees, and enjoys their respect although he is harsh on them. Frank is different; he gets involved as a manager and hesitates when it comes to delegating tasks however competent the others, and when he has to delegate he rephrases the decisions so as to appear ungrounded or unsuitably delivered. He is no leader, but an “operations manager”.

One day Vince talked to Frank about the possibility that the latter might take over the company, and mentioned that this would not be done automatically. At the same time he expressed both appreciation for his management qualities, and reserves as regards his leadership qualities. He went so far as to mention what in Frank’s style should change.

Frank then met with a consultant he trusted and from whom he found out roughly the same thing. Ever since, Frank has worked daily with the consultant, overtime, for a year. He was determined to become president at any price, even if it meant becoming the sort of leader the current president had in mind. Being very smart, he designed a series of strategies to carry out this plan. Nevertheless, he did not succeed in conceiving a programme with specific landmarks for assessment. The consultant kept reminding him, but Frank was always “too busy” or said such a programme would be too rigid for him. Oddly enough, since formal planning was one of his strengths in the business world...

Frank remained just as efficient in the way he conducted business, but incoherent as regards the strategies to help him succeed as a leader. Two years later, Vince named somebody else president of the company.”

¹⁵ Egan (1988).

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- brings forth personal priorities, to complete or replace conformity to the priorities imposed by others or the system;
- involves significant people in achieving the goal and improves interpersonal communication;
- helps avoid imprudent, resource consuming, doomed actions;
- contributes to discovering the reasons and rewards for sustained action. Over time, activities unrecognised as bringing satisfaction tend to lose their vigour, decrease, or cease;
- leads to becoming aware of the consequences of inaction, but leaves it to the client whether to have initiative or not;
- calls for help from significant persons and contributes to the update of the personal contact network;
- involves the idea of career planning, which strengthens self-confidence and uniqueness of the person in a life situation;
- favours identifying and rallying internal and external resources to achieve the goal;
- builds the idea that personality, abilities, motives, interests are subject to change, but may keep or increase their value;
- puts in perspective the professional competences the individual possesses or may acquire;
- foresees interaction and determination with one's own career intervention;
- fights the routine model in performing the professional role;
- requires defining one's personal priorities in terms of urgency and importance;
- shapes the attitude from gathering impressions to anticipating success;
- creates a non-compulsory but desirable logic of things necessary to achieve the goal.

Disadvantages:

- often criticised for disregarding the content of learning in favour of method;
- does not imply inference of success in a perfect logical project schema;
- restrains interventions such as “momentary inspiration” or “bright idea” in long-term career planning;

- forces the anticipation of results conditioned by intermediary results that cannot be clearly defined in the early design stage;
- requires the presence of the counsellor (or of a reflexive self) in different moments of implementation, which may be difficult to ensure;
- keeps the fundamental tension between one's own good and others' understanding of it;
- diminishes the role of the individual in obtaining the final product, since it distributes the merit among the contributors.

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Occupational Profile

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History

Occupational profile is an instrument of information and guidance that everybody involved in career counselling can benefit from.

In order to understand its nature, structure and usefulness we have to go back and make a comparative analysis with other related instruments that were at the origin of occupational profiles in the current form. We mean by that **professional (micro)monograph, professiogram, psychogram, and occupational / professional standard**.

Trade description was done as early as a few centuries ago, once guilds and crafts associations appeared, interested in passing on the secrets of their work to next generations of apprentices.

In the industrial era, in the beginning of the last century, drawing up a “catalogue of trades” became a necessity in order to train the workforce required by a rapid economic growth. This is how professional monographs emerge for the first time in Europe: elaborated by Fontegne (France), Christaens (Belgium), Moede (Germany), Myers (England), and Munsterberg (United States). In the USA these are still a subject matter for the final years of the graduate school under the title “the world of trades”.

In Romania, the first professional monographs – for industry – are elaborated and published by Roșca, Cupcea and Peteanu, then by Nestor and Mărgineanu.

The importance and role of the instruments mentioned above for the world of professions contributed to the emergence of a new science – **professiology** – which studies the

professions and the medical, mental, social and technical conditions required to practicing them. Within the science, the occupational profile methodology represents a first rank objective.

Theoretical background

A simple description in the beginning, the professional monograph has acquired today the characteristics of “a complex and integral study of a profession, created by a team of specialists in various fields aiming at a multilateral analysis of the profession from the point of view of its requirements (medical, psychological, ergonomic, pedagogical, sociological, etc.) and counter-indications” (Tomşa, 1996).

The content of a **professional monograph** refer to: object of work, social and economic aspects, specificity of work, means, materials and equipments used, work conditions, characteristics of the effort, indications and counter-indications. “Conclusions are written down in tables of what should and should not be done, from a psychological, medical, pedagogical point of view. Thus we move from the analytical aspect to the type of personality required in a profession” (Dictionary of pedagogy, 1979). Main source of inspiration for the **occupational profile**, the professional monograph is a more ample, detailed, and scientifically rigorous instrument, although less used in practice.

Occupational profiles present synthetically, the same elements as a monograph, but are much more operative and easier to consult (only 2-4 pages).

Another element of difference contained in a **monograph** is the **professiogram**, which is “a scientific document of normative value, including physiological, medical, psychological and social requirements of a profession” (Tomşa, 1996) that may exist independently, as tables or graphs. Occupational profiles have partially taken over elements (professional and medical) of a professiogram. Some extended monographs include **psychograms**; these are graphic representations of the results obtained by a subject in different psychometric tests he or she has undergone, or diagrams with the distribution on a scale of the mental performance, traits, and capacities. Such data do not appear in an occupational profile.

It has to be made a distinction between the content of a profile and that of an **occupational standard**, which “signifies quantitative and qualitative landmarks to indicate the possibility to satisfactorily perform the tasks implied by a job, units and elements of competence, accomplishment and assessment criteria. In 1999, the Romanian qualification authority, COSA – The Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment had the mission of creating a new system of professional competence assessment and certification based on occupational standards” (Jigău, 2001). COSA considers that “professional competence represents the capacity to apply, transfer and combine knowledge and skills in various work situations and environments.”

Both occupational standards and profiles contribute in their turn to drawing up the **job description**, an important operational document to present in detail the tasks required of an employee with a view to ensuring him/her optimal conditions for work, and benefits for the employer. A job description includes: the name and objectives of the position, the department it belongs to, competences and responsibilities, requirements regarding studies, years of experience, and aptitudes. The job description serves as an organizational document indispensable to each employee and as a support for work assessment.

Method presentation

In conclusion of the terminological distinctions mentioned, the occupational profile remains the unique instrument destined for immediate and rapid consultation, being available to all categories of clients, beneficiaries of career counselling.

Both in Europe and America the current methodology for drawing up an occupational profile is based on the associated theories of Holland and Super. According to Holland, behaviour can be understood if one sees the professional interests and aspirations as an expression of the personality development (see the article: **Holland Inventories**). Super (and later Barrach) considers that individuals compare their capacities with the requirements of various professions and choose the occupation that fits best.

Starting with 1995, Romania takes over the name of the instrument (*occupational profile*) and the model of "modern micro-monographs" recommended by European and international institutions, including the International Labour Office, concerned with elaborating and revising professions worldwide.

In Romania there is The Classification of Occupations (COR), issued by the Ministry of Labour and the National Institute of Statistics.

Occupational profiles may contain various categories of information; for those created in Romania the following structure has been agreed upon:

- **Name of occupation, trade, profession.**
- **Code of occupation, trade, profession** in COR (www.mmssf.ro/website/ro/COR.jsp).
- **Definition of occupation, trade, profession** in COR.
- **Description of occupation, trade, profession:** a set of landmarks allowing the identification of the occupation, trade or profession: synthetic description of the profession, basic activities, aim of the work, main means, result of work.

- **Content of work:** general descriptions of the activity itself, a concrete image of what a certain occupation, trade, or profession represents.
- **Work tools / instruments:** remarks on the work instruments / tools used by the person carrying out an activity in a certain profile.
- **Obligations and responsibilities:** basic tasks in the job description.
- **Work hours:** information on the duration of daily activity, characteristics (regular hours, overtime, shifts, day time, night time work, etc.).
- **Environment:** the place where the activity is carried out; the work climate.
 - **administrative environment:** types of organizations that host that particular occupation, profession or trade, position in the hierarchy of an organization, subordination and control, staff, levels of responsibility and autonomy, promotion possibilities,
 - **physical environment:** the place where activities are carried out (industrial site, office, field work, etc.), schedule and pace, degree of physical and intellectual effort, toxicity, special work safety issues,
 - **social environment:** professional relationships developed with certain categories of organizations or persons (members of the work team, internal and external collaborators, clients);
- **Risk situations:** enumeration of dangers (if any) that can jeopardize the work (accidents, technical defects, human errors).
- **Requirements:** medical, psychological and physical requirements of an activity. Related with the nature of the activity, environment and professional risks, personal characteristics can be described as what is recommendable and what is not in an occupation, trade or profession. Counter-indications either medical or psychological are related to work and refer to the physical or psychological characteristics to be disadvantages / risks for a person, safety at work, other people involved.
- **Aptitudes:** skills necessary for optimal work. What is taken into consideration are aptitudes that can be assessed by means of psychological tests: general learning aptitudes, numerical aptitudes, spatial perception, shape perception, clerical abilities, hand-eye coordination, digital skill, manual skill, etc.
- **Transferable skills:** abilities initially practiced in an occupation and that can successfully be used in other contexts (e.g. using instruments and equipments, giving advice, following verbal or/and written instructions, research and investigation, rendering and transmitting information, elaborating and interpreting information, analysis and assessment of information, planning and organizing operations and activities, ensuring services, group work, preparing materials and reports, etc).

- **Educational and professional requirements:** academic and professional performance necessary in a profession, position or occupation; they can be expressed through: the entry qualifications (in a qualification grid), types of diplomas or study certificates (excerpts of a national list), categories of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary, or references to an occupational standard, level of experience, membership in various professional associations, etc.
- **Streams of vocational training:** institutions of vocational training, initial and continuing, which offer the necessary background for an occupation, trade or profession, existing forms of vocational training and conditions for access, facilities by various organizations for vocational training pre- or post-employment.
- **Salary, promotion, other advantages:** information about the remuneration range, average income per types of organizations or sectors, possibilities for bonuses (overtime, seasonal work, etc.), other advantages specific to the occupation, trade or profession.
- **Dynamic of the occupation on the labour market:** information regarding the history of the occupation, trade or profession, rhythm of change and influence of new technology, tendencies regarding the evolution of vacant / filled positions (locally, nationally, in Europe).
- **Professional mobility:** possibilities and tendencies regarding the occupation, trade or profession, in the following aspects: change in content and dynamics, change of job, address, country, in order to get or keep the employment.
- **Related occupations, trades and professions:** information regarding the possibilities of professional mobility it is desired to intended to change the occupation or even the profession. In this sense, related professions and occupations are listed, conditions of switching from one profession / occupation to another, regarding the aspect of the work content (by adaptation and/or training on the job, external training).
- **Specializations:** a common body of knowledge allowing a relatively easy passage from one specialization to the next. An exclusive specialization may lead in time to under-qualification or over-qualification. For each occupation, trade or profession the main directions of specialization, activities, materials, products and specific technologies are mentioned.
- **Additional information:** data on organizations or works that can offer additional information on an occupation, trade or profession, such as: information and counselling centres, mediation centres, professional associations, employment agencies, training providers existing professional qualifications, statistical reports, collections of professional profiles or monographs, video materials, multimedia, occupational data banks, media, company inventories, annual reports, reference publications, etc.

Target population

The information offered through occupational profiles are suitable for all categories of beneficiaries from information, counselling and guidance services: pupils, graduates of any education and training cycles, adults (in various situations on the labour market).

Examples, case studies, exercises

Below, a model of occupational profile compiled in accordance with the methodology described above:

CAREER GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR*

Profession code in The Classification of Occupations in Romania (COR): 241208

Definition:

The profession is part of group 2412 – *Specialists in staff and staff training*. Counsellors offer administrative services related to staff policy, recruiting or professional training, job analysis, and vocational guidance. They draw up vocational information materials and give consultations to people interested in employment, career choice, complementary instruction or training.

Description of the profession. Content of work

Counsellors offer information to the unemployed and people who address the employment agencies on the contents and requirements of occupations, trades and professions, obligations and responsibilities of employees, tools and instruments used in activity, and training requirements. They help people in the process of self-knowledge (self-assessment) and in making adequate career decisions. Counsellors help people to become aware of strengths and weaknesses of their personality with a view to making a full use of the favourable elements. At the same time they teach people how to present themselves and address prospective employers, and agree together on the steps to be taken in choosing an occupation, trade or profession, for training or employment, and

* Occupational Profile compiled by The Working Group for *Career Information and Counselling* Project.

offer information about where to turn in order to get more help. Counsellors point out alternatives to solve the misfit between previous choices and current career options, including continuing training. They give general advice in management, especially to those who want to become self-employed.

Work tools / instruments

In order to inform the clients on the work tools / instruments used in certain fields of activity, various means of vocational information are employed (occupational profiles, posters, career newspapers or other printed materials, interactive computer-based systems, video recordings). Instruments of psychological testing are also used to evaluate individual characteristics with regard to the requirements of occupations, trade or professions, as well as questionnaires of interests, values, attitudes.

Obligations and responsibilities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing accurate, complete and update information regarding the labour market in the clients' fields of interest • Using means of knowledge and assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing good communication skills, accuracy and confidentiality when dealing with people who seek assistance • Cultivating positive attitude in people who seek vocational guidance, as an indispensable condition for professional success
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Work hours

Five days a week, 8 hours a day, but function of the problem complexity or urgency overtime may be necessary.

Work environment

Counselling is mainly carried out in an office. Certain activities take however place outside the office, in psychological testing rooms or other institutions (companies) for contacts or documentation (in libraries). In order to ensure confidentiality of the exchanges with their clients, the counsellors need their own office for standard activity or specific applications. Counsellors may work alone or in a team of specialists from within or outside the institution.

Risk

A counsellor's work is virtually devoid of risks; in rare cases the counsellors may fall victims of verbal or physical aggression on the part of difficult or mentally challenged clients.

Requirements

Medical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • healthy body, normal general development • resistance to fatigue • anatomic and functional integrity of the speech organs • normal hearing acuity 	Mental: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • superior intellectual capacity, characterized by fine analyses and syntheses, thought flexibility and creativity • expressive and coherent language • good attention focus and sense of observation • good emotional balance and self-control • people skills • assessment and decision-making skills • personality: SRE – Social, Realistic, Enterprising (Holland classification)
Physical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaking • listening • normal visual acuity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hands use • fingers use • manipulating psychological testing instruments and apparatus

<i>Aptitudes</i>	Level 1 (very poor)	Level 2 (poor)	Level 3 (average)	Level 4 (high)	Level 5 (very high)
General learning aptitudes				✓*	
Communication aptitudes					✓*
Calculus			✓		
Spatial perception			✓		
Shape perception			✓		
Working with documents (rapid check of numbers and words)				✓	
Hand-eye coordination			✓		
Digital skill			✓		
Manual skill			✓		

* significant for the occupation

Transferable skills

- using testing instruments and equipment;
- giving advice;
- following verbal and/or written instructions;
- research and investigation;
- rendering and transmitting information;
- elaborating and interpreting;

- analysing and evaluating information;
- planning and organizing operations and activities;
- providing services;
- group work;
- preparing materials and reports.

Educational and professional training requirements

Education is at the **university level**, state or private, through faculties of psychology, sociology, pedagogy, social work, 3 or 4-year bachelor degree and a master's degree in counselling.

Vocational training

Information on higher education in the field can be obtained from the magazine "FORUM", the website of the Ministry of Education (www.edu.ro) and Ploteus database (<http://Europe.eu.int/ploteus>).

Salary, promotion, other advantages

Salaries in state institutions vary with the field and the current legislation. The salary includes: basic salary, raises for certain work conditions, bonuses for excellent results, special premiums.

Positions are filled by competition, according to the law.

Dynamics of the profession on the labour market

In 2006, in the system of the Romanian Ministry of Labour approximately 350 counsellors were employed in employment agencies. In institutions that belong to the Ministry of Education, at the same time there were roughly 1350 counsellors, in psycho-pedagogical assistance centres and offices. In universities there were about 50 counsellors. Overall there were approximately 1700 practicing counsellors throughout the country, in various counselling networks (education, work, youth, army, health, etc.).

Professional mobility

Demand for positions in the field is on the increase (especially in schools and employment offices). It is estimated that new technological changes, envisaged staff redundancy as a consequence of the privatisation process will significantly increase the role of the employment agencies and implicitly that of the information, counselling and vocational guidance counsellors.

Related occupations / professions / specializations

241201 workforce and unemployment counsellor
241202 workforce and unemployment expert
241203 workforce and unemployment specialty inspector
241204 work safety inspector
241205 vocational training instructor
241206 workforce and unemployment specialty referent
241207 expert instructor in vocational training
241209 workforce consultant
241210 labour market analyst

Additional information**can be obtained from:**

- employment agencies (county-based / in Bucharest)
- psycho-pedagogical assistance centres
- information and guidance centres in universities
- youth centres
- private professional consulting companies

or:

- collection of legal provisions
- specialized bibliography

Method evaluation**Advantages:**

Occupational Profiles – as information, counselling and guidance tools –bring the great advantage of being consulted quickly, operatively, on a large scale. They are conceived in an accessible manner, in loose-leaf printed form or leaflets, distributed free of charge in all institutions that provide counselling services or are connected with networks of this kind.

Disadvantages

Due to the dynamics on the labour market and the accelerated rate of social and economic change, the occupational profiles must be periodically updated with information and requests from each occupation, which involves the existence of highly qualified human resources permanently focused on the subject.

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Education Fair

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History

The notion of fair is not new. However, it has always been an opportunity for exchanging information, opinions, for marketing, commerce and sharing successful practices.

What is usually associated with the “fair”? More often than not, there are on display cars, book, pottery products, electronics items, animals, consumption goods, sports and leisure equipment, tourism services, education and training opportunities, business propositions.

Regarding the service offer of the career-related information, counselling and guidance agents, **The Education fair** represents a means of communicating with clients and of informing them (pupils, students, teachers, parents, educational and training providers), an opportunity for self-evaluation on the part of beneficiaries, for career planning and development by investigating the education market. An education fair is at the same time a means to find news, research, interact, and especially prove an efficient information management, since it not only offers pupils, university students, and adults information, but also helps them make decisions for career development.

If until recently an education fair was an option, in the sense that only those schools and universities that were more dynamic and motivated used to organize / participate in one, it has currently become an essential issue of educational marketing, an efficient means of immediate impact, making visible the offer of educational institutions and attracting new pupils and students, all the more important since the younger generations dwindle.

Before getting to the magnitude, level of organization and importance it enjoys today in the career field, education fairs used to have certain characteristics:

- focus on specific sections: some target group, some subject matters;
- static, unidirectional, similar to traditional educational methods;
- information was passively received without participants' involvement;
- it used to be thought that participants had only a few choices to make;
- rigidity and tendency to routine.

In Romania there is no great tradition for education fairs and they were not valued until recently as an instrument to inform young people on educational alternatives, and academic and professional pathways. In recent years, however, education fairs have been taken up as a modern means of educational marketing.

Currently, education fairs have grown increasingly “sophisticated”, they are better outlined, especially as regards fitting in with the European educational policies in guidance and counselling, and development of complex educational marketing strategies that involve the active involvement of the participants.

It is estimated that every five years information changes completely (in certain fields). Were this tendency to continue, pupils should benefit from new information almost permanently, at least through electronic channels. This means that much of what they will have learnt this year might be “outdated” by the next (Mills, 2002). In this context, aside from information and efficient learning management, specialization of professions, transferable skills and attitudes, it is necessary to redefine educational fairs and capitalize on their potential in counselling.

Theoretical background

What is an education fair?

- The most important educational marketing strategy in order to make known to the public the offer of educational and vocational training institutions.
- Educational event reuniting numerous resources in order to facilitate the best career-related decisions.
- Method by which multiple opportunities are released for professional training to meet the existing interests and resources.
- Appropriate moment for education and training institutions to share their experience and ideas with the participants, and to get to know useful people in conferences, workshops or presentations.

Education fairs promote responsibility in decision-making and encourage information-based choice of educational and career-related tracks. Specialists consider that one of the most important steps in career counselling is information, a basic requirement of the knowledge society we live in (Plant, 2001). Knowledge is the key to personal and professional success. Only if informed can one make efficient decisions, in accordance with one's own potential, and social and economic demands.

The quality of information, counselling and guidance service in schools is especially given by the easy access to information. For example, on issues such as: the educational system, available places in schools and universities, situation of optional courses, average admission grades to high schools and universities, demand and offer for certain professions on the labour market, history of educational institutions, educational projects, situation of the most sought-for professions, educational packages, practical aspects of certain professions, etc. (Jigău, 2003).

In counselling and guidance services, the main objective is to develop independence, responsibility and autonomy as regards career planning and decision-making. Thus, information on the self, the others, educational offers, occupations, the labour market, problem-solving, successful business sectors, personal marketing, and career success is absolutely necessary, alongside abilities.

Information on career and self-knowledge represents the configuration of the core aspects in career choice and management. In education fairs, participants find out career-related information, but what also counts are the interests, values, abilities, personal attitudes, the expectations of significant people (parents, friends, role models, etc.), family traditions (Băban, 2001).

Education fairs are an extremely valuable and rich source of information regarding educational and career-related programmes offered at a given time, in a certain community, so that pupils and students may make good decisions in full awareness of the circumstances.

“Using information in decision-making presupposes a succession of processes: reception, decoding, interpretation, appreciation of consistency, usefulness, risks, costs and importance of the data to the self” (Jigău, 2003). From this perspective, and education fair should adapt its offer so as not to be merely a list of facts, “museum-like”, but to be attractive, interactive, meet various personal characteristics, learning styles, educational and professional interests.

Throughout the years, education fairs have become popular, more useful and awaited for, as a safe way of obtaining information, investing in one's own education and training. A constantly changing educational and employment market requires pupils and students to seek, get involved, update information in order to adapt their own profile to the academic and professional requirements, be successful in school and in career.

Education fairs are an important opportunity for practicing successful information management, corroborated with social and emotional abilities, communication skills, specialized knowledge and qualities necessary to succeed.

Developing your career is like climbing a mountain. At the base there is very clear information on education and work, on roles and the self, according to the structural career theory (Law, 2000). The author identifies 7 important elements in career guidance and counselling: setting objectives, creating a friendly learning environment, collecting and conveying information, identifying needs, summing up progress, clarifying one's plans for the future (Law and Bedford, 2000). There are aspects that can be extended over the "procedure" used in organizing an education fair: the quality of stands and activities, climate, the relationship between exhibitor and participants, preparation and motivation, assessment means, etc.

Method presentation

How to organize and education fair?

- Organizers compile the fair programme together with the organizing partners some 5-6 months in advance, agree upon the logo of the event, print posters, leaflets or other attractive advertisement elements (T-shirts, mugs, pens, caps, postcards, backpacks, business cards, bookmarks, key chains, etc.).
- Organizers contact the exhibitors and communicate the programme, the conditions of participation (through the media, Internet), send the registration form, data on the size of the stand and the participation costs. The catalogue is then compiled (e.g. the University of Bucharest at the Education fair of May 2005 advertised the exhibitors in the culture and entertainment free magazine "7 Evenings"), a CD-ROM may be burnt with the list of the exhibitors accompanied by a brief presentation of each.
- Exhibitors arrange the stands (originality is important in the presentation of the most relevant information, special presentations, educational materials and products).
- Exhibitors inquire whether other promotional facilities at the event are available, such as posting promotional materials at the entrance.
- Schools, high schools, universities, other institutions (printing houses, producers of educational materials, school and office stationery, uniforms manufacturers, tourist agencies, etc.) present their offer (with the support of teachers, pupils, parents, management, volunteers).
- Media representatives, leading persons in education, the public takes part in a press conference to officially open the education fair.

- Organizers and exhibitors offer special programmes with free entrance or for a charge: conferences, workshops on career-related topics, lectures, suggestions for target groups, round tables, “live” career counselling service by meetings with specialists, personalized programmes, book launch, guests and successful experiences, seminars, contests with prizes (e.g. spending the day with the management of a high school, a basket of books or stationery, a training course offered by specialized institutions: communication and leadership, career-related decision-making, personal marketing, etc.), cocktails, the top of stands, etc.
- Exhibitors’ aim is to attract visitors to their stand, by initiating conversation on the service offered. Their methods must be varied and original: e.g. offering gifts with the school logo and mascot, organizational culture elements, *PowerPoint* presentations, up to serving candy, making hairdos or invitation to a glass of soda or a piece of cake baked by the students.
- Exhibitors visit the fair before opening to verify the functioning of equipment, visit neighbouring stands and see the competition, identify the type of visitors. It must not be overlooked that the main objective of taking part in the fair is meeting as many potential clients / future pupils or students. As a quantitative indicator, it is agreed upon a number of persons to talk to in the first part of the day. As a qualitative indicator, one may consider the written visitors’ opinions of the stand in question. Contact data of these visitors are written down in the book of the event, by permission, which is important for follow-up.
- Sponsorship is sought for with a view to organizing similar future actions.
- Those in charge of assessment hand out questionnaires, organize focus groups, synthesise results, communicate the statistical data of the fair, and make further studies.
- Organizers and volunteers compile and publish a bulletin of the fair or the journal of the event.

9 directions in the organization of an education fair, similar to the ones found in learning and counselling, and that influence the choices of the main actors present at the fair (Stoll; Fink, 1996):

- common and clear objective – “we know where we want to get”;
- responsibility for success – “we have to win”;
- team spirit – “we will make it together”;
- lifelong learning – “we all learn always”;
- risks – “what we learn is new”;

- support – “we can always use some help”;
- mutual respect – “each of us is important”;
- openness – “we welcome differences”;
- celebration, gaiety and fun – “we are valuable and we are having fun together”.

In pre-university counselling in Romania, the county-based Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Centres are in charge of organizing and/or taking part in education fairs, in collaboration with the School Inspectorates, local communities, NGOs and others. In higher education, the Centres for Information and Guidance are involved in attaining this objective.

Public and private institutions are welcome, according to the target audience.

What are the **success indicators** of education fairs?

The statistics of a fair is performed through methods of quantitative and qualitative research: questionnaire, focus group, interview, observation, document analysis. Items such as the following are investigated:

- Number of exhibitors
- Number of visitors
- Visitors’ profile
- Presence of the media
- Sponsors
- Honorary guests
- Degree of exhibitor / visitor satisfaction through:
 - organizing the fair so as to satisfy the participants’ objectives and needs,
 - participation of the target population in a comfortable environment, and an atmosphere of security and study,
 - supporting (self)assessment, value clarification, decision making regarding school and career development options,
 - gathering statistical data on the fair (e.g. the International Fair “Education 2005”: “73% of the exhibitors appreciated the quality of the visitors as good and excellent, 78% of the exhibitors consider that most expectations have been fulfilled, 85% characterize the fair as important, well organized, excellently advertised, 87% state they will come back for the next edition”);

- Opening ceremony: press conference, guests
- Types of activities
- Exhibitions, parallel fairs: specialty books, office stationery, equipment, job festivals (career opportunities)
- Events: education seminars, presentations, conferences, workshops, lectures, competitions, sports performances, theatre, meetings, cocktails, etc.

What does an education fair offer?

1. In education

- Information on education and training programmes offered by graduate schools, high schools, vocational schools, colleges, universities, other providers.
- Information on the number of available places in education and training institutions.
- Tendencies on the school network market, educational opportunities, professional training, and the influences they can have on educational and vocational decisions.
- Information regarding educational routes in various institutions:
 - name of school, postal address, telephone and fax, e-mail, web page, contact persons (secretary, principal),
 - types of school in the region,
 - profiles and specializations of educational institutions, other educational programmes,
 - conditions of admission, schooling, facilities and equipment,
 - quality of training (statistics of the results in national evaluations, number of graduates finding immediate employment, projects),
 - means of transportation, etc.;
- Comparative study of the offers: number of places, classes, study profiles, specializations, at the community level.
- Opportunities for study in Europe: scholarships, specializations, exchanges, mobility programmes.

2. As regards the labour market

- General state of the labour market and of the economy: statistics, tendencies.

- Structure of the job: job description, position's place in the organizational hierarchy, occupational profile.
- Mediation services.
- Vocational guidance, information and counselling.
- Information regarding specialized materials (textbooks, journals, course books) in human resources.
- Manifestations ensuring direct contact for selection and placement shaped by offer and demand (Curriculum Vitae, interview simulations, meeting employers).
- Presentation of demand / offer in continuing education and training:
 - information on programmes with external funding for human resource development,
 - offer of the labour market locally, regionally, nationally; national and European legislation,
 - presentation of employment possibilities and conditions on the European market.

Target population

Persons:

- Pupils, university students, young graduates.
- School counsellors, career counsellors.
- Teachers, administrative staff.
- Parents, relatives, the public (employees, unemployed, etc.).
- Educational managers (of public and private institutions).

Institutions:

- Kindergartens, graduate schools, vocational schools, theoretical high schools, technological high schools, colleges, universities, other public and private education and training bodies.
- The European Commission, ministries, embassies.
- The local community and council.

- The Institute of Educational Sciences.
- The Teacher Training Authority, the School Inspectorates.
- Media, NGOs that host training programmes.
- Publishing houses (pedagogical, multimedia), bookstore.
- Providers of software, Internet, IT, administrators of educational portals.
- Providers of educational products (furniture, uniforms, architecture, etc.).
- Services (tourist agencies, banks, insurance companies, extracurricular agents, stationery producers, manufacturers of didactic facilities and equipment, etc.).
- Entertainment agencies (theatre plays, competitions, dance contests, party planners, etc.).

Visitor's profile:

- seeking information to make responsible educational and professional decisions;
- motivated to investigate the individual offers and take part in fair activities;
- learning-oriented and passionate about a certain field;
- open and flexible regarding new tendencies in education and career counselling (e.g. information and communication technologies, European CV, Europass instruments);
- well-behaved.

Examples, case studies, exercises

The visitors' guide through an education fair

- Choose the right outfit so as to feel comfortable.
- Give yourself sufficient time to visiting.
- Before the fair make up a list of the information you are interested in and that will eventually be presented in the fair.
- Visit the fair with a few friends, classmates, fellow students or with your family.

- Become acquainted with the atmosphere of the fair.
- Visit all stands, ask questions, ask for additional explanations, and write down the main ideas in your persona agenda.
- Select schools, high schools, and universities you prefer (studies indicate that 25% of visitors look for a certain organization in a fair – Barbu, 2005).
- If asked “What do you want to find out?” be prepared with a short personal presentation.
- Take home free materials to consult at your leisure: leaflets, posters, business cards, etc. of institutions in your area of educational and professional interests.
- Prepare Curriculum Vitae up to date. You may meet employers.

Exercise 1. A day at the education fair

Imagine a day at the education fair. Write a 500-word essay on what you believe it will be like. Then visit and evaluate:

- the quality of the stands (aesthetics, number and value of the materials offered);
- how well-prepared and receptive the representatives at the stands are regarding the visitors’ questions;
- diversity of presentations and advertising;
- the programme and specificity of the proposed activities;
- the degree of satisfaction and the behaviour of the participants;
- organizations and institutions taking part in the proceedings, etc.

On the basis of the research performed, rewrite the essay on the fair. What similarities and differences are there between the two essays? Comment on the importance of actually attending the event. The information gathered can be corroborated in an informative bulletin compiled by pupils. The exercise can be done individually or in teams. Alternatively, organize an education fair in the classroom, to follow the items enumerated above. Analyse press excerpts (presented below) on education fairs.

Exercise 2. Analysis of desired profession

Think of three professions you would like. Choose the most important to you. Study its occupational profile. Visit the education fair to get as much information you can, and answers the following questions:

- What educational path would you need to take?
- To what professional field does the chosen profession belong? What specializations are there?
- What are the current tendencies in the field?
- What are the abilities you must have and develop?
- What are the tasks and responsibilities specified in the job description?
- What qualities are important in order to succeed in that profession?
- Does the chosen profession meet the needs of personal and professional development?
- What do you like about the chosen profession and what does it offer you?

Exercise 3. My business card

Create original business cards, which represent you in the following stances:

- fair organizer;
- stand representative;
- representative of an educational institution, etc.

Exercise 4. Fill out the Registration Form for the education fair.

EDUCATION FAIR

Bucharest, 13-15 May 2005

University of Bucharest, Faculty of Law

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration deadline: 18 April 2005

1. **Exhibitor's name:** Bucharest Municipal School Inspectorate / The Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Centre
2. **Activity field:** school counselling, career counselling
 - Students' association
 - Library

- Research centre
- Publishing house
- School
- Cultural institution
- Media institution
- NGO

3. Full address

Telephone / fax E-mail:

Contact person:

We request being included in the catalogue of participants of the Education Fair 2005

4. Exhibitor's proposal¹⁶: exhibitors are invited to propose events such as: book launch, conferences, round tables, presentations of products and services, demonstrations, competitions, artistic shows or other manifestations in accordance with the profile of the Fair.

4.1 Date and time: Type of event:

Guests: Requests from organizers:

4.2 Date and time: Type of event:

Guests: Requests from organizers:

5. Presentation in the participants' catalogue (maximum 50 words):

.....

Signature of the legal representative and the stamp of the institution:

¹⁶ Source: Centre for Information, Guidance, and Vocational Counselling, University of Bucharest

How education fairs appear in the media? (excerpts from the written press)

- *“The education fair has been a constant present in the Romanian city of Cluj-Napoca in recent years. Wednesday, 9 April 2003 ... is the debut of the education fair “University at home”. The fair will be held in the town of Turda so that high school pupils in senior years be acquainted with the educational offer of the Cluj universities and receive information regarding the admission in faculties right from their representatives” (Source: www.isjcj.ro/comunicate).*
- *“Time for a major option. The **Education Fair** “Career 2001” comes to the aid of secondary school pupils. The Theoretical High School “Gh. Asachi” has been filled in the past few days with advertising posters, computers, television sets, high school pupils, teachers, secondary school pupils. Organized by the School Inspectorate, the Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Centre, and the Teacher Training Authority. The fair aims to orient the 8th graders. The educational fair has several stages. In the first stage, class masters discussed vocational guidance issues with the pupils, then the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Centre handed out same pupils a questionnaire on vocational guidance. The results of the questionnaire have shown that almost half of them have not decided yet on the school they want to go to” (Source: Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Centre, Galați).*
- *“**The education fair at the National Children’s Palace:** cultural and educational activities, presentation stands, results and good practice of projects, exchanges, workshops, symposia, book events, vocational competitions. For a week, between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., pupils and parents can find out everything on the places in the 9th grade, specializations, extracurricular activities offered by Bucharest high schools, summer camps, etc. ... around 150 stands have been set up, where 105 high schools, 18 graduate schools, the National Agency of School Camps and Tourism, etc. will be presenting their offers” (Source: www.ismb.edu.ro).*
- *“**The fifth edition of the fair**, 7-9 May 2004, has managed to draw almost 32000 visitors interested in the educational offer of the University of Bucharest, to which the following have contributed: 29 publishing houses, cultural institutes, media partnerships, the Days of Open Gates at the University”; Between 3-6 May 19 faculties, colleges and departments were present in debates on volunteering, workshops, presentation of new professional opportunities for students, rock, classical, folk concerts, etc., educational offer of the University of Bucharest for the academic year 2005-2006” (Source: www.unibuc.ro).*
- *“The Career Arenas is the first career fair for young professionals organized in a private partnership, aiming to professionalise and increase the relevance of these type of event, currently organized exclusively by NGOs or employment agencies. With the slogan “More than just a job. A CAREER!”, the event reunites **45 big and medium enterprises and over 3000 young professionals**, thus addressing the*

recruitment and employer branding need of companies, with respect to its most dynamic segment, that of the young professionals. The Palace Hall, 26-27 October 2005” (Source: www.hotnews.ro/articol_34703, www.careerexperts.ro, www.igads.ro/stire_1325.html).

Method evaluation

Educational fairs are an essential means of guidance and counselling because they offer *“a real opportunity of making a step forward for one’s educational and professional future by access to credible, up to date information, on the educational and labour market and on the opportunities they offer.”* (www.ecareer.ro).

Advantages:

- educational event, given the nature of the presentations;
- dynamic and adapted to the clients’ needs in order to highlight the education and training offers;
- product quality (“resource space”) is stressed, as well as the services offered;
- stimulates the development of professional identity and preparing pupils for career;
- addressed to a large audience, not only to young people enrolled in education;
- immediate and up-to-date information on education, training, and career development opportunities as a basis for decision-making;
- participants are engaged in observation, discussions, consulting the materials exhibited, exploration and organization of information;
- strong links with the job fairs, an important step in career choice (education fairs also include workshops, conferences, festivals, interview simulations, meetings with employers, presentations of companies, career workshops);
- facilitates the direct contact with key people in the field of education.

Disadvantages:

- amount of information, on occasion insufficiently systematized, offered simultaneously to participants who are unable to evaluate and make decisions;

- time-consuming organization;
- stands of various exhibitors' profiles;
- in most cases, organized regionally and nationally;
- significant costs with the organization, ensuring exhibit materials, flyer printing, etc.

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Job Club

Luminița DANEȘ

National Agency for Employment, Bucharest

History

During the depression years in the USA, workforce placement agents started to systematize their activity in the *Thursday Night Club*, *Man Marketing Group*, and later, *Job Club*.

In the 1970s, the US National Department for Defence faced a major problem that was not related to any armed conflict or strategy. At the end of the Vietnam War, thousands of soldiers were returning from the front and about to re-enter the civil society. Many of them had suffered severe trauma during the war, not being ready to start working again, and the skills, aptitudes and experience acquired on the battlefield were no immediate recommendation for civil professions.

Eager to recuperate as soon as possible these soldiers and give them back to their old professions or find them new ones, the US Government sought for the aid of experts in experimental and industrial psychology Dr. Nathan Azrin (behaviourist) and Victoria Besalel. They developed a new concept: *Job Club*, a model of group counselling that ensured the necessary support for people who want to start again with their professional activity. On the basis of Azrin's model many subsequent models of Job Club were developed, under new forms and names (*Job Searching Club*, *Professional Development Program*).

Theoretical background

Azrin's Job Club represents more than professional counselling; it is theory merged with practical job search. Rigorously structured, Azrin's method brings the beneficiaries together in an organized manner to look for a job, focusing on the aim set.

Unlike other Job Clubs, less structured or guided, Azrin's model introduces a selection criterion for the participants. Thus, only clients who have a clear view of their own professional options (what kind of job they wish for) will be included in the programme. According to Azrin's theory, the chances of success for a Job Club are increased when the participants:

- have a clear aim: looking for a particular type of work (that they are able to describe);
- know their own potential, resources (aptitudes, abilities, interests) well; the author holds that members of a Job Club should be able to enumerate at least five aptitudes / abilities or competences of their own that could help them identify, obtain and keep the desired job;
- have clear information on what companies they should contact;
- start from a certain model (work plan) in their attempt to get a job.

Once the aim has been set, participants can learn to use a series of efficient instruments and techniques to find a job: compiling a professional file, attending an interview (simulation), job analysis, analysis of the companies carrying out activities in the field of interest, self-assessment of knowledge, interests and aptitudes, etc.

The purpose of the method is not only to guide and support participants in their search for employment, but also to help them *find and keep a job where they can express and make use of their entire potential by achieving the satisfaction and performance expected*. Otherwise they will soon be unemployed again.

Method presentation

Job Club is a practical, active and participative model where the participants discover and develop under the direct guidance and supervision of the Job Club's leader, their aptitudes, competences and abilities required by the position they wish to fill.

A Job Club targets maximum independence of the participants by making them aware of their own aptitude resources, making them practice and develop these aptitude resources, and acquiring efficient techniques of active search for a job and negotiation with potential employers.

Occasionally under different names, the group technique of Job Club gives participants the opportunity to create or develop their own contact network, while at the same time being a **support group** when the number and/or the complexity of obstacles cause frustration that might lead to blockage or delay in attaining the aims. In order to overcome such situations, participants may be instructed in coping strategies (Frydenberg, 2004).

A Job Club will have a binary structure, combining the theoretical training in using job search strategies (assessment of interests, aptitudes and needs, providing the necessary information, etc.), with practical applications in workshops (interview simulations, contacting companies by telephone in order to get an appointment for an interview, supervising and feedback, etc).

Suggestions for the organization of a Job Club

Structure

A Job Club may be structured as a homogeneous group (e.g. persons who want to start working again after a period of staying at home for various reasons, persons that were made redundant in restructured companies, young graduates, etc.) or as a heterogeneous group consisting of individuals in various situations, whose unique common feature is the need or wish to find a job.

Nevertheless, studies indicate a preference for heterogeneous groups, showing that the maximum efficiency of the group is conditioned, among others, by the diversity of its members, as a mirroring of real life situations in a mixed society made up of differently structured personalities.

Number of participants

Experts recommend any variant between 2 and 30 participants (function of existing conditions: space, activity type, etc.).

Duration

Azrin's initial model was phased throughout 3 weeks, with 4 hours a day allotted to theoretical training and 2 hours a day for practicum (practicing and developing specific

aptitudes). During the programme the participants are permanently supervised and benefit from coaching¹⁷ in view of maximizing performance in the context of change.

Other models of Job Club propose duration of 3 to 5 weeks, which may be extended for clients who have not succeeded in finding employment.

Topics / Activities

1. Setting realistic aims with reasonable deadlines from one session to the other (e.g. identifying the desired position, three options preferably).
2. Information gathering strategies: identifying persons, organizations / institutions in the participant's field, carrying out research on those firms / persons who are of greatest interest, and contacting them with to obtaining an appointment for an interview (using the principles / rules of the informational interview¹⁸).
3. Compiling one's professional file: CV, letter of intent, thank-you letter, employment application, etc.
4. Job search techniques: documentation, means of contacting potential employers, attending an interview, drawing up a plan of action, etc.
5. Using sources of information:
 - informal sources: family, friends, acquaintances,
 - formal sources: ads, promotional brochures, newspapers, business magazines, informative bulletins of NGOs and other professional publications, media (written press, radio, television, public and private recruitment agencies, job fairs, etc.);
6. Using professional profiles and standards.
7. Coping strategies.
8. Vocational training strategies.
9. Discussions with potential employers (corporate representatives) and visits to their headquarters.
10. Success stories (exchanges are planned with persons who have found employment as a consequence of taking part in a Job Club).

¹⁷ Technique based on a professional relationship between a coach and the person entering the coaching process with a view to improving concentration, develop a personal learning style, improve problem-solving abilities, in a word increase performance.

¹⁸ Interviewing technique that involves initiating conversations with people working in the field of interest, so as to gain as much information as possible about the respective occupation / profession / field, and build a contact network.

Elements of a job club

1. Recruiting candidates and information: identifying persons in search of a job who are interested in taking part in the Job Club programme, and informing them with regard to the aim, activities and benefits of such a programme.

2. Enrolment in the programme and assessment: identifying the psycho-professional potential: abilities, aptitudes, professional interests, education level, experience and professional competences of candidates.

For enrolment it is recommended to use a registration form, as presented below. The participants are also requested to consult the Participant's Guide.

3. Going through stages of vocational training: as a consequence of identifying the needs of vocational training, clients will be advised to enrol in certain training courses to perfect less developed skills or acquire new competences necessary for the desired employment.

4. Support services. We must make sure that no client abandons under psychological stress¹⁹ caused by discouragement, anxiety or other emotional disorders triggered by obstacles (internal or external) that are perceived as insurmountable.

Support services include as the case may be: vocational counselling and guidance, psychological assessment and counselling, medical services, family counselling, legal advice, consulting and assistance for setting up a business, etc. All the services mentioned require the intervention of specialized staff in each of these fields, coordinated by a case manager who will supervise the efficient communication between the intervention team members, with a view to supporting the client identify the necessary resources to overcome the crisis.

The crises may be prevented by initiating clients in efficient coping strategies. Studies have evinced that unemployed people tend to react to frustrating situations defensively, by avoidance or withdrawal, aggressiveness / revolt or resignation and lack of interest, guilt, which can be an impediment to adaptive behaviour, develop non-constructive coping behaviour (Doyle, 1992); professionally stable persons (employed) focus on solving the frustrating situation by seeking the most efficient means to overcome the obstacles they face (Cochinescu, 2005), and developing proactive coping behaviour.

¹⁹ Studies estimate that stress due to work-related and professional problems ranks second in the hierarchy of vocational health problems in European Union countries and affects over 40 million employees.

5. *Developing personal marketing aptitudes*: it is an essential stage, often granting success in the interview; it requires a personal development plan, a personal marketing policy (valuing one's own qualities, stressing on those aptitudes / abilities and competences that are important with respect to the vacant position). The art of highlighting one's strengths must be guided by a carefully designed strategy.

In essence, in the job search process, personal marketing is the art of building one's own image and promotion strategy, based on the principle that "it is the ad that sells the product", on condition that inside the "package" should be those qualities promoted. The real competences of a person remain the basis of the "transaction" represented by employment; a negotiation in which candidates offer their time, knowledge and competences in exchange for a salary.

6. *Drawing up a plan to find a job* involves:

- identifying the vacant jobs corresponding to one's studies, experience, aptitudes, competences and professional interests / expectations);
- identifying professional training needs and taking part in training programmes with a view to adapting one's competences to the requirements of the desired position;
- preparing for the interview (discussing the possibility of changing certain requirements of the position, that the client might not meet, or creating a new position if the vacancy has already been filled);
- drawing up a back-up plan in case the initial plan should fail to yield the desired result.

7. *Counselling with a view to keeping the job*. In order to obtain or keep a job it is important that one should be familiar with and follow certain norms of *professional ethics*. These involve:

- knowing and carrying out one's tasks and obligations;
- knowing and following internal regulations;
- showing a positive attitude;
- respecting one's colleagues and supervisors;
- respecting the work hours;
- taking on responsibilities;
- dressing appropriately, etc.

8. *Monitoring.* Job Club sessions may be held even after finding employment, especially with those who have a history of being fired. The aim of the sessions is to offer the necessary support so that these persons are able to keep their newly found job (over a transition period). It is recommended to monitor the subjects until they acquire self-confidence and reach a certain degree of independence and emotional balance, which will allow them to reconstruct adaptive behaviour and adjust their reaction to the new professional situation.

Facilities offered

Some counselling centres offer participants in the Job Club certain facilities:

- telephone access;
- computer and Internet to find a job and send an application;
- professional journals;
- fax and photocopier;
- video recordings (interview, information, and vocational profiles for some occupations, etc.);
- library.

Expected results

At the end of a Job Club programme the participants will be able to:

- set their aims with regard to career development;
- know the rights and obligations of an employee, in accordance to the law;
- know and use job search techniques (identify sources of information, drawing up a CV and a letter of intent, preparing for an interview, salary negotiation);
- identify their own qualities and flaws, with a view to finding the most efficient means of development, that is compensation, through adequate training programmes;
- identify real employment opportunities in accordance to their own aptitudes, competences and vocational interests;
- assess the jobs identified (advantages and disadvantages);
- draw up a plan to obtain a position;
- create a network of professional contacts;
- draw up a personal marketing plan;

- develop efficient coping strategies;
- take on responsibilities regarding one's own vocational options and consequences of these decisions.

Target population

In principle, participant in a Job Club can be any person able to work²⁰ interested in identifying and getting a job appropriate to one's studies, professional competences, aptitudes and interests.

A special target is nevertheless represented by *disadvantaged persons and groups, persons at risk of social marginalisation and exclusion*:

- long-term unemployed;
- disabled persons;
- the Roma population and others ethnic minorities;
- young people from foster homes;
- people over 45 in age;
- women starting work after the maternal leave;
- persons at risk of being trafficked;
- repatriates, refugees or persons other some form of social protection.

Examples, case studies, exercises

The participant's guide

This document shall be used as an information instrument both as regards the activities and services provided to participants in the Job Club, and their obligations throughout the programme.

²⁰ *Able to work* is an indicator specific to the domain of labour; it refers to anyone of legal age for employment, with physical and intellectual capacity to work, as well as the will to carry out a lucrative activity.

- Throughout the Job Club the participants receive information on vacant positions on the labour market, the most efficient methods and techniques to identify and obtain these positions.
- The counsellor provides participants with accurate and current information in accordance with the statements / offers made by employers.
- Participants are responsible for the accuracy of the information provided to the counsellor.
- Participants let the staff of the counselling centre know as soon as they have found a job.
- Information provided by the participants shall only be used by the counsellor in order to support them in identifying and getting a job. This information is highly confidential and shall not be revealed to a third party without permission.
- Participants make sure that they qualify regarding their studies, competences and experience before applying for a position.
- Participants inform the employer and the counselling centre in due time in case they cannot attend the interview on the date previously set, for any reason. Participants who fail to keep an appointment with an employer and have no justifiable reasons shall be excluded from the Job Club programme.
- Participants inform the staff of the counselling centre about any changes occurred in the personal data included in the registration form (e.g. change of address, telephone number, completing other studies, etc.).
- Participants may request information related to the employment opportunities and shall be directed to additional sources of information regarding certain fields of interest, institutions or other specialists when the counselling centre does not have staff to solve collateral problems (e.g. medical assistance, psychotherapy, marital counselling, etc.).
- If, during employment negotiations or after employment, there should arise any discontent regarding the employer's behaviour, the latter being suspected of infringing the law, the participant shall be provided with all legal information regarding the rights and obligations of employees and employers, and legal advice. The decision to resorting to legal action belongs however to the participant.

Registration form for the Job Club programme

Personal data

Last name: First name:

Date of birth: Registration number (in the registry):

Address:

Telephone: E-mail:

Marital status: married ☐, single ☐, separated ☐

Nationality: Ethnic origin:

Studies (Describe separately each education form completed, starting with the most recent):

.....
.....

Personal aptitudes and competences (acquired throughout one's life and career, but do not appear on any certificate or diploma):

.....
.....
.....

Professional experience (Mention in turn each professional experience starting with the most recent):

.....
.....

Fields of interest (check the field / occupation you would like):

Agriculture: agriculturist ☐, fisherman ☐, fish breeder ☐, fruit tree grower ☐,
vintner ☐, farmer ☐, others (specify)

Commerce and services: sales agent ☐, commercial agent ☐, cleaning agent ☐,
hairdresser ☐, shoemaker ☐, others (specify)

Tourism and food services: cook ☐, bartender ☐, baker ☐, maid ☐, others (specify)

Education / Learning / Culture: kindergarten teacher ☐, elementary school teacher ☐, secondary and high school teacher, professor ☐, librarian ☐, others (specify)

Constructions: mason ☐, painter ☐, welder ☐, joiner ☐, plumber ☐, carpenter ☐, others (specify)

Food industry: baker ☐, miller ☐, pastry chef ☐, butcher ☐, confectioner ☐, others (specify)

Information technology: operator ☐, web designer ☐, network administrator ☐, others (specify)

Others (please specify):

Transportation

Driver's license?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Do you currently drive a care?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Availability

What work hours do you prefer?

Full time ☐

Part time ☐

Are you willing to work in another town?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Indicate the time of day you would wish to work in:

Morning ☐

Afternoon ☐

Evening ☐

The information you have provided will be used by the counsellor in order to support you in identifying and obtaining employment. It is strictly confidential and shall not be revealed to a third party without your consent.

Declaration: I hereby declare that the information provided in this form is accurate. I also declare that I have read the information included in the *Participant's guide* and I pledge myself to follow the terms therein.

Signature: Date:

Registration date: (to be filled out by the counsellor)

Method evaluation

Advantages:

- clients actively search for a job under the direct guidance and supervision of the counsellor;
- clients feel that they belong to a group (the support group) with the same interest, whose members support each other with a view to attaining a common goal;
- motivational resources are encouraged in each group member;
- clients may solve problems as they occur by simultaneous training courses;
- group job search techniques are more efficient than the individual sessions (Bolles, 2005 in "*What Color is Your Parachute?*" shows that the success rate of these techniques is 84%, compared to 15% with individual application of the same techniques);
- clients have the opportunity of creating a contact network;
- clients can exchange experience, ideas, information, values with the group members;
- clients become more optimistic regarding the opportunity for change, and personal and professional success.

Disadvantages:

- the group facilitator / moderator cannot always divide his or her attention equally between the group members, according to their needs or expectations;
- information confidentiality cannot be ensured as strictly as in one-on-one sessions;
- the group might focus too long on irrelevant aspects that do not have the same importance for all group members;
- some people are afraid of interacting with group members and may perceive such situations as threatening: e.g. persons with affective disorders (depression or anxiety) cannot benefit from the advantages of this group support; these problems are related to the eligibility of the members in the Job Club and can be solved by careful pre-selection.

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Organisation of Professional Congresses, Conferences and Seminars

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The professional life of specialists in any field is not longer conceivable outside a direct and continual communication process, targeting topics of interest at the time or relating to the future. The direct exchange of ideas, the debates, presentations of personal or collective achievements are an integral part of the current landscape of professional life oriented to providing quality services and lifelong learning. This by no means implies that books, journals, scientific work in documentary or electronic format will not remain highly valuable intellectual instruments of individual professional development, still for a long time to come.

In the same context, it is estimated that over the following years non-mediated meetings between professionals will grow increasingly frequent.

International, European, national, regional, local congresses, conferences, seminars, workshops, etc., organized by institutions or individuals will be more and more part of the daily occurrences of any profession.

We address here researchers in education, school counsellors, psychologists, pedagogues, social workers, sociologists, speech therapists, teachers or other specialists involved in broader social and cultural life, anticipating that the information offered will prove useful when they are in a position to organize congresses, conferences and seminars, with international or national attendance.

The professional events can be organized in various ways, according to:

- fields targeted: education, health, arts, etc.;
- main topic / activity: debates, workshops, result presentations, competitions, demonstrations, assessments, analyses, creative groups, etc.;
- categories of participants: specialists / non-specialists, young / adults, nationals / foreigners;
- host country / institution;
- magnitude of the event (number of participants, duration);
- location, etc.

Each professional event such as a: congress, conference, seminar, workshop, exhibition must have its particular content confer it uniqueness, local / national specificity, etc., professional and financial efficiency, impact, significance, memorable feature.

Here are the main categories of activities to consider during organization:

- **initiative group**
- **organizing committee**
- **budget**
- **programme**
 - plenary sessions
 - panel discussions
 - workshops
 - exhibitions
 - social programme
 - publishing scientific papers
 - event assessment
- **communication**
 - presentation leaflet / publicity
 - website of the event
 - participants
 - registration
 - call for papers
- **other important aspects**

The initiative group

The idea behind organizing a professional event usually belongs to a **small group or a person**.

People who form an initiative group are usually highly motivated, perseverant, and good organizers.

If a congress, conference, seminar, etc. is held under the auspices of a professional organization from the country or from abroad, it must be permanently involved and informed with respect to the progress made and in some cases permission must be asked for certain professional or organizational initiatives or measures.

The organizing committee

According to the event, organization measures must start 1 or 2 years, 6 months to a year, 3 to 6 months, or one to 3 months in advance.

The organizing committee is usually made up of a **President** (who has authentic professional prestige and is well known in the professional community) and **Members** (who have a special status and/or professional and social role in order to make decisions and obtain the necessary official, financial and logistic support for the situation).

The president of the organizing committee is in charge with the general coordination of the organization efforts and will not be directly involved in the activity of subcommittees. He or she will focus on scientific and professional aspects of the event (congress, conference, seminar): setting a general topic and topics specific to each workshop, inviting speakers, professional personalities, representatives of the authorities, etc.

The members of the organizing committee coordinate various **subcommittees**: scientific (assessing and scheduling the papers proposed for presentation), financial, technical, publicity, registration, general programme (scheduling speakers, workshops, hourly exhibitions), social programme etc. While organizing the event they must be exempted from a series of current professional duties. As the event draws near, they must meet ever more frequently; the president will attend some of the sessions.

The activity of the organizing committee starts with setting **the conference topic**. Usually, the topic reflects the professional interests of the given community, future methodological development, practice, social impact and economic effects, and in case of a counselling event: school counselling, family counselling, counselling disabled people, adults, distance counselling, indiscriminate access to information and counselling, ethical and qualitative aspects.

At the same time, the **date** or interval of the event will be specified. The date has to be “negotiated” with a significant number of key persons in the field in order to be convenient to many potential participants and not to overlap with other important manifestations for people interested in the current event.

The best time for organizing congresses or conferences of international / national scopes are: April – May and September – October.

In setting the **location** of the congress, conference, seminar, etc. the following must be taken into account: easy access for all participants (transportation: by air, railway, bus, car, subway, etc.), rooms for plenary sessions and workshops, access to the technical facilities requested by the participants for their presentations: sound, translation, computers, copy machine, telephone, fax, Internet connection, reasonable distance between the conference hall and the restaurant or hotel, etc.

In case of international congresses or conferences it is important to establish the **official language / languages** of communication. Aside from the language of the host country, one or two other official languages are proposed (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian etc.); the more extensively multilingual a conference, the longer the list of participants.

Function of the number of official languages established, working materials of the congress or conference are printed: leaflets, registration forms, programme.

Budget

The members of the organizing committee make an estimation of the necessary **budget** according to the anticipated magnitude of the event.

A specialist (accountant, treasurer) will deal with this aspect exclusively.

The budget will cover:

- expenses with renting conference halls, equipment, paying for the participants’ folders, transportation, tickets to various cultural events, Internet access, mailing expenses, telephone (landline and cell phone) and fax (so as the organizers can communicate with participants or others involved: sponsors, translators, technicians, authorities, etc.);
- giving some categories of free of charges (transportation and/or accommodation, and/or meals) for the participants: speakers, chairperson, moderators of panels or workshops;
- fees for speakers (if it is a condition);

- payment for various services: translation (of leaflets and speakers' papers), tourist guides, equipment operators, collaborators;
- publications (printed envelopes, letter head, leaflets, posters, the volume containing the papers, possibly in electronic format), design and functionality of the event website;
- meals and receptions (opening and closing);
- social programme (if complimentary for the participants), etc.

The budget is made of:

- registration fees;
- sponsorships;
- grants (given by professional associations, cultural and educational funding programmes, etc.);
- fees charged the exhibitors (book, movie, IT applications for counselling);
- contributions of authorities in the field (in cash or offering conference rooms, equipments);
- selling advertising space (in leaflets, posters, the volume containing the papers of the participants).

Volunteer organizations, foreign language speaker students (as guides), counsellors, teachers, etc. may significantly decrease the organization costs.

Tentatively, a budget is made up for approximately half of the expected participants.

For the total budget, the President of the organizing committee will request the committee or subcommittees to estimate the necessary costs for each section of the event. As the event draws near, the budget will be adjusted periodically insofar as there is more exact data regarding the number of participants.

Keeping the exact record of expenses and evidence of accounting documents are minimal obligatory conditions of financial management.

Since a series of organization expenses are needed well before the budget is fed with fees and sponsorships, it is absolutely necessary to apply for a grant from the appropriate ministry or a professional organization well ahead of time.

Once fees start to flow in, sponsorship demands are granted to various firms / institutions and certain facilities from authorities are obtained, the budget is re-evaluated and in case the initial estimations were too modest, some aspects may be complimentary (e.g. free entry for students, free distribution of materials), costs of the social programmes may be

reduced or on the contrary, should the amount be too small, savings are necessary in projects and activities.

With a view to finding sponsorship for the professional event in question, appeal is made to banks, corporations, transport companies, tourist offices, printing houses, private and government agencies, professional organizations, etc. Certain airlines, hotels, restaurants, etc. give significant discount (if convincingly asked) for important events – as advertising – according to the importance of the event, the participation, number of participants, time of the year, how far ahead the reservations are made, etc.

Transportation and accommodation costs do not fall in the obligation of the organizer, guests will individually opt for various means of transportation and comfort categories from the recommended ones. There may be some exceptions for special guests. Certainly, should the financing of the event fall to certain government agencies or special programmes, all the costs may be taken over by the organizers. In such situations they can make reservations for travel and accommodation, convenient for each participant.

In important international / national events, such as a congress or a conference, the fees cover the meals (lunch and dinner for the entire period paid for), urban transport, part of the general organization costs and a series of services for the comfort of the participants.

Programme

The programme of the conference is an extremely important and painstaking matter. The following aspects should be considered:

- scheduling plenary sessions and speakers;
- scheduling workshops and their moderators;
- grouping the presentations according to topic;
- planning the beginning and ending of plenary sessions and workshops, coffee breaks, meals, professional visits (to exhibitions of publications or other products, film festivals, institutions etc.);
- planning social activities (visits to cultural, tourist sights, shows).

Many people base their decision of participating or not in a professional event on the programme and its content.

The factors influencing the decision of the potential participants whether to take part or not in the proposed event are:

- topic of the event and related topics of the workshops;
- personalities in the field who will speak in plenary sessions;

- short trainings delivered by the very speakers in plenary sessions or by other authors, before or after the event;
- costs (fees, transportation and accommodation expenses);
- printed materials and facilities offered;
- social programme;
- modular schedule and workshops, which allows participants to make up a sequential attendance path, function of their interests.

Plenary sessions

According to the duration of the congress or conference (1-3 days), 2-4 speeches by prestigious and skilled speakers in the plenary sessions may be scheduled. These interventions are recommended to last between 30-45 minutes to one hour, to be original and present viewpoints and scientific hypotheses that stimulate further discussions and questions.

Plenary sessions are moderated by the President of the organizing committee or alternatively by other official persons or prestigious scientist.

It is wise to have a back-up in case one speaker can no longer attend (for health problems, transportation difficulties, family events, etc.).

Panel discussions

An interesting way to exchange information and ideas – in plenary sessions – are panel discussions on a certain topic, coordinated by a moderator, with participants from various countries or institutions with specialists who have related interests, etc.

Workshops

The topic and content of the scientific papers presented therein, as well as the emergent discussions actually represent the essence of the respective professional event. On the other hand, the topics should be generous enough to allow the inclusion of as many categories of scientific presentations submitted as possible.

Workshops focusing on the practical aspects of counselling are most successful and popular.

The topic of the workshop must be announced long in advance the congress or conference in order to allow potential participants time to prepare the presentations drawn from their professional experience.

Each workshop (usually 2-4, according to the magnitude and complexity of the event) have a moderator or president, chosen from the most representative personalities of the particular field. He or she makes sure that everyone with a paper will have a chance to present it, moderates the discussions, sums them up, and write a report of the workshop.

The organizers are responsible for providing each workshop with the technical facilities requested for presentations (video-projector, computer with special presentation programmes, overhead projector, flipchart, etc.). A technician is in charge of the equipment: sound devices, mobile microphones, desk for simultaneous translation, computers (with the software requested for presentations), copy machine, video-projector, video, photo and audio recording devices, etc.

Assurance all this equipment available throughout the event is recommended.

Exhibitions

Professional congresses and conferences are excellent opportunities for various categories of persons and institutions interested (publishing houses: organizing publication exhibitions, tests, questionnaires, counselling software; agencies specializing in printing educational materials, video resources, etc.).

If there is an exhibition organized, it will be introduced by the President of the organizing committee in the first plenary session, and included in a **special leaflet**.

The location of the exhibition must be in the immediate vicinity of plenary session or workshop rooms and its hours must be synchronized with those of the main event.

The organizers decide (function of their financial needs) if the exhibition space is free or it is for a charge.

Social programme

Establishing a social programme is desirable and represents a good opportunity for the participants to get to know each other and/or the organizing country / institution.

Usually there is an opening reception (on the first evening the participants arrive) and a final one. It is desirable that these receptions be free, since it is a sign of hospitality on the part of the organizing country / institution, the costs being covered either by the registration fee or by the higher authority or a sponsor.

The social programme includes visits to cultural sights (museums, historic sights, art galleries), tourist sights (that should give participants a significant image of the specificity of the country / region / city / area), shows (theatre plays, concerts) or formal and information visits to certain educational institutions, centres or associations, etc.

Beforehand, during the event or afterwards, a half-a-day trip may be organized (usually by a tourist agency and for a charge); it is recommendable for congresses or conferences

that last more than 2 days. Some organizers include in the registration fee (when possible) all the costs for the social programme, thus greatly simplifying things.

For the companions of the guests or participants an additional social programme may be provided, synchronized with that of the participants.

Publishing scientific papers

Printing or copying on a CD the texts of the scientific presentations – from plenary sessions or workshops – before the event and distributing them to the participants, free or for a charge, is the desired solution. In reality, either because the participants fail to comply with the deadline for paper submission, or for financial and technical reasons, this is rarely possible. More often than not, there will be a volume of abstracts (distributed in the beginning) or a volume with the presentations from plenary sessions and abstracts of the workshops (distributed by mail after the event).

Posting the presentations on the website of the event is an alternative when there are financial restrictions; in certain situations the author's permission must be obtained for the electronic publication of the scientific paper.

Making recourse to schools with service or technical profile in order to obtain more advantageous prices for the printing is a solution not to be overlooked, should the budget be insufficient.

Event assessment

It is customary that at the end of a congress, conference or seminar is an assessment by questionnaire to the participants (simple and with an answering scale: poor, good, excellent). The data thus obtained may offer the organizing committee feedback on aspects such as: general quality of the organizations, value of the speakers' presentations in the plenary sessions, general scientific level of the interventions, social programme, exhibition, quality of the translation, publications.

Assessment questionnaires (translated in the official languages of the event) may be included in the participants' folders or distributed at the appropriate moment, to be gathered right after completion.

Communication

The organization of a congress, conference, seminar, workshop presupposes an enormous amount of telephone, fax, e-mail, and Internet communication.

In case of professional events with participants from several countries, is recommendable that the organizers speak the official languages of the congress or conference.

The main categories of partners that the organizers have exchanges with are:

- **participants:** individual persons, members of professional organizations, officials (to announce them the event, topic, objectives and date, registration conditions, call for papers);
- **speakers in plenary sessions:** local or foreign (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, invitation to make a scientific presentation in one of the plenary sessions, facilities that the organizers can put at their disposal);
- **workshop moderators** (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, invitation to moderate a certain workshop, announcement of facilities that the organizers can put at their disposal);
- **official guests**, usually, at the opening and closure of the event (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, invitation to take part in the opening session and greet the participants);
- **sponsors** (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, estimate of the benefits from advertisement and an application for financial aid);
- **exhibitors** (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, invitation to exhibit their products throughout the event, information regarding the costs, requests for promotional materials to be distributed to the participants);
- **interpreters** (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, invitation to render their services for the duration of the event, possible applications for free services or sponsorships);
- **technical service provider:** sound equipment, copy machines, computers, photo, audio and video recording devices (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, invitation to render their services for the duration of the event, possibly a request for free services or sponsorships);
- **accommodation and food service providers** (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, invitation to render their services, possible requests for discount, free services or sponsorships; certain written conventions may be signed with hotels and restaurants in this respect, beforehand),
- **social / cultural service providers** (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, invitation

to render their services for the duration of the event, possibly a request for free services or sponsorships);

- **transport service providers** (announcement of the event, topic, objectives and date, international / national professional relevance, invitation to render transport services, possible requests for discount, free services or sponsorships).

Presentation leaflet / publicity

Any professional event – of great magnitude or modest – is inconceivable without a **presentation leaflet**. It is printed in a number of copies exceeding that of the maximum number of the expected participants.

The leaflet will be distributed for free with sufficient time before the event so that as many key persons as possible are informed.

In addition, several **posters** in public places, halls of related institutions, 1-2 months or 2-3 weeks beforehand have a positive effect.

Inserting short **notices** of the event in journals and on websites (national and international) is highly recommended.

As the event draws near, all potential publicity sources of the event will be identified and used: television channels, radio stations, specialty magazines, newspapers etc. that might wish to promote the congress, conference or seminar.

At the same time, several **press communiqués** will announce the event and – as the event draws near – more and more information in the media. It all culminates with invitations to the opening and closing sessions, with the final **press conference** (interviews with speakers in plenary sessions, with the President of the organizing committee, official persons, discussions with participants from various countries / institutions).

A **file of the echoes in the media** works well; some representative photocopies of the event impact may be attached to the invoices and thank-you letters to the sponsors.

Website of the event

In recent years, organizers of professional reunions of great magnitude have used IT sources in order to improve their communication with the potential participants, to advertise the event, present the programme and the necessary materials that must be made known beforehand, to facilitate the financial arrangements of the participation, help with online registration.

Creating a website of the conference – independent or included in that of the organizing institution – is the solution for most organizers of congresses and conferences.

It can also offer information on: reservations in different hotels for accommodation, presentation guidelines, workshops, data on the scientific and organizing committee, sponsors, social programme, tourist information, transport, weather forecast, etc.

For certain categories of participants with special requests, e-mail, telephone or fax can be used; these requests may be technical requirements for the communications, special diet (vegetarian, etc.), transport facilities for the disabled, support for a tour before / after the event, accommodation of companions of the participants, etc.

We would like to exemplify by certain websites used in organizing recent international conferences:

- *Careers in context: new challenges and tasks for guidance and counselling*, AIOP, Lisbon, Portugal, 2005: www.aiospconference2005.pt (independent site).
- *Career counselling and the global labour market*, University Petru Maior, Târgu Mureş, Romania, 2005: www.uttgm.ro/career_center/main1.htm (site included in the site of the host institution).

Participants

Target categories who must be let know of the congress, conference, seminar, etc. are:

- the community of school counsellors, employment counsellors, university counsellors;
- presidents and members of professional associations in counselling and related fields (associations of psychologists, pedagogues, school counsellors, etc.);
- university staff with interests in the field;
- persons with official and professional responsibilities in the field of career counselling in training institutes and ministries, etc.

Lists with members of certain associations, institutions, organizations in the field can be very useful in order to identify a large number of persons who might be interested in the respective event as possible.

Special guests, speakers in plenary sessions or moderators of panels are provided with free transportation, accommodation and meals, when possible. Whatever the case, the guests must be explicitly told of the conditions in which they are invited to participate.

Officials of the host country / institution (ministers, state secretaries, directors, inspectors, governors, mayors etc.), must also be invited in good time.

In certain cases and for certain categories of people **official letters** will be sent by mail in order to announce the events in schools, universities, ministries, professional counsellors' associations, teachers' associations, etc.

Registration

Drawing up a **registration form**, printed (either on the leaflet of the event or separately) or in electronic format will systematize and considerably aid the organizers' work. The form will provide information regarding the topic of the event and the location, workshops, registration and submission deadlines, presentation guidelines, participation costs (registration fee, costs of the social programme, accommodation), including discounts for prior registration, special fees for students or on a limited duration (e.g. one day), etc.

The same registration form can be used for **hotel reservations** (single, double, apartment and with breakfast or without). It will thus be possible for the participants to choose, according to their personal demands, from the offers made by several hotels (different in prices, comfort, etc.). Everything relative to accommodation should be entrusted to a travel agency or the participants should make reservations themselves after having been given all the necessary information related to the recommended hotels. In both cases, organizers will have to check the reservations made with hotels and solve concrete situations with receptionists.

The arrangements for accommodation (reservations, pre-payment, additional services such as transportation from the airport, etc.), must be made well in advance in order to avoid troubles in participation due to lack of convenient accommodation (tariffs, comfort, distance, facilities).

Many hotels or chains have their own websites with online reservation; these facilities must be verified by organizers and transmitted to prospective participants.

Call for papers

The same registration form is used to submit a presentation, mentioning the title and special equipment necessary.

The language, duration and guidelines must be clearly specified and in detail. As a rule, a Microsoft Word document is required with the title, the author's name and professional / scientific title, the affiliated institution, address, telephone, fax, e-mail, a 6-10 line abstract followed by 5-10 pages, including the bibliography, in Times New Roman, font size 12, 1.5 spacing between lines, A4 page format, 2.5 cm page margins.

Papers may be presented under various forms in round tables, demonstrative sessions, reading / oral presentation in a workshop, panel, simulations of professional situations and critical incidents etc.

Other important aspects

The participants' folders will include: the programme of the event, paper / notebook for personal notes, abstract of papers, list of participants' names and e-mail addresses, social programme, advertising leaflets, map of the city / area / country, a branded pen, name tag, possibly a CD of traditional music, mouse pads, badges etc.).

It must be remembered to print and display **signs** and **notices** regarding the programme, the schedule in workshops, transport schedule, etc.

Name tags for participants, plenary session speakers, special guests, exhibitors (with institution logo and name of the event, Mr / Ms, first name, last name, country of origin), and in different colour for organizers (president, members of various committees, technicians, etc.).

Labels with the name and country of the chairperson, of the speakers and workshop moderators will be printed in time and placed before each session.

Throughout the event there must be an **information desk** for the participants (providing information on workshops, participants, social programme, information on the city, country, transportation, weather, medical aid, cultural and sports events, gift shops, etc.).

Responsibility can be delegated by subcontract to **specialized firms**: accommodation, catering, transportation from the place of arrival to the hotel, to the venue, etc. In this case the organizational costs will be considerably higher.

