

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN THE GUIDANCE PROCESS



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The terms although used in the masculine refer, indistinctly, both to the feminine and masculine

Introduction

The integration of guidance practices in a school context is based on a comprehensive and integrative view of educational practices. In this perspective, guidance activities are complementary to other educational activities and their effectiveness depends, to a large extent, on the capacity to create synergies between the different educational agents, and between them and the community.

Considering that career development is a lifelong process that involves successive transitions, then the integration of guidance practices in a school context is crucial to support individuals in defining their life project and managing the multiple transitions that career development involves.

Teachers can, at different times in the educational process, play a complementary role to that of other educational agents (e.g. psychologists and parents) in promoting career development. In this sense, it is important to know how to support students in building a career project. However, that on its own is not enough. It is necessary to articulate their practice with other educational agents, in order to contribute to comprehensive interventions and avoid isolated actions, with little consistency and, therefore, less effective in responding to students' needs.

Given the influential role of teachers in building students' life projects, the purpose of this brochure is to reflect on the content of guidance in an educational context and to make some suggestions for a more consistent and intentional action in the support that teachers provide in this field.

The Construction of Life Projects Nowadays

The construction of a life project is a continuous and multidimensional process. Continuous, because it occurs throughout the life cycle and multidimensional, because it must take into account other roles besides those of student and worker. Thus, support for building career projects starts in pre-school education and extends to supporting adults in managing the multiple transitions that a career involves. In this perspective, the construction and implementation of a life project is a never-ending process, because as the individual and the contexts are transformed, new challenges arise.

Thinking about building a career project also implies thinking about the challenges of today's globalised economy and the skills needed to respond to such demands. In a world of work that is largely structured in temporary functions, in customer-oriented business and in which work is mostly developed in autonomous teams with the ability to find solutions in a short amount of time, interpersonal, communication and problem-solving skills are fundamental.

However, these contexts of great unpredictability and change also require the building of a solid personal identity, a proactive and self-regulatory attitude, a strong belief in personal capacities, as well as a creative curiosity of knowing and discovering opportunities.

This situation challenges all educational agents, to create shared objectives in the actions they perform and increase resources, in order to develop in the student, skills and knowledge that are adaptive to the new social order.

In this sense, it is important to promote:

- Planning
- Autonomy
- Curiosity
- Trust
- Cooperation

PLANNING

What does planning mean?

Planning involves some concern for the short and medium term future and the capacity to set academic goals and consider the means and the support required to reach them. Planning also means being decisive and believing in personal resources to achieve their own goals.

Planning avoids indifference to one's own career. Considering school failure, for young people who do not find in formal schooling the motivation to learn, it will be important to plan alternative paths. To realise the importance of outlining life and career goals.

AUTONOMY

What does it mean to be autonomous?

Being autonomous means being free to decide or in one's behaviour. Autonomy implies knowing how to make decisions, to promote greater certainty about life choices. In this way, problems of indecision are prevented through the promotion of feelings of control towards one's future at school and professionally.

CURIOSITY

What does curiosity mean?

Curiosity is related to knowing how to explore information about oneself and the reality where the individual builds his/her life. This demand for information from different sources requires the questioning, experimentation and use of multiple means of exploration. Thus, promoting curiosity facilitates realism about themselves and school and professional opportunities.

TRUST

What does trust mean?

Trust means believing in personal abilities and skills to solve problems, perform tasks and overcome challenges. Trust allows for initiative, persistence and ambition.

COOPERATION

What does it mean to cooperate?

Cooperation consists in the appropriate use of interpersonal behaviours and methods that facilitate the achievement of group goals. Cooperation involves being sensitive to the needs of others and the contributions that a group can make to perform a task. Cooperation, by requiring openness to others, is essential to the development of one's self, of the group and is the basis of teamwork.

Teachers have an Important Role

Teachers have an important role in the education of their students because, as models of citizenship and work, they not only promote academic learning, they are also a source of social learning. Each one of us, as adults, in analysing our individual path finds many of the foundations of who we are in 'our' teachers. These foundations supported future projects as well as the knowledge, and above all, the knowing of who we are, that shapes us today. Thus, it is important that teachers seek to engage in supporting the career development of their students through the infusion of career development activities in curricula.

These activities can begin in the first years of schooling and extend through the following ones, adapting the contents to the needs of the student. In this way, it is possible to transmit values, develop attitudes and behaviours that can gradually be internalised and used in the management of the multiple transitions of career development.

The accomplishment of these objectives, in a work articulated between teachers, parents and psychologists, will enhance the adaptability necessary to define a life project and the management of the multiple transitions along the educational and professional path.

Promoting adaptability: the role of teachers

Next, we present a set of objectives and activities that teachers can develop in the scope of their teaching to promote planning, autonomy, curiosity, trust and cooperation.

PLANNING

Teachers can foster planning when: they help students relate what they learn and the goals they have for their lives, in order to promote a forward-looking perspective with confidence; help students identify learning objectives and plan what to study and how to study; value the role of school and work for the realisation of life projects.

AUTONOMY

The autonomy of the students can be promoted by teachers when they promote initiative in general, they help to identify barriers and support to the accomplishment of objectives; when they help students reflect on decisions they take (or not) in different domains of their life; when they help to describe attitudes and beliefs that positively and negatively influence decisions; when they encourage persistence when faced with difficulties, they listen to their students with genuine interest.

CURIOSITY

In preparing students for the work and social world, it is particularly important for teachers to foster in their students the reflective capacity for themselves and for the school and professional reality.

Students' reflection on themselves can be made through dialogue focused on the personal impact of academic experiences, confronting new content, themes and academic experiences (e.g. study visits, curriculum extension activities, etc.) to foster new interests and skills.

Reflection on school and professional opportunities can be done by helping students relate academic content to professional activities, contacting the labour market through study visits or curriculum extension activities, mitigating stereotypes by showing that occupations and skills equal development regardless of gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status, to provide opportunities in the scope of vocational and educational training, without value judgment or prejudices.

TRUST

Teachers can foster the confidence of their students when they promote academic success, the exploration of skills and competences, the realisation of abilities and aspirations, positive attitudes towards themselves and their school performance, alternatives and unconventional solutions to solve problems.


COOPERATION

In the teaching of their classes, teachers can facilitate cooperation when they use pedagogical strategies that imply cooperation to achieve group goals, introduce academic content that promotes knowledge about the specificities of minority groups with respect to beliefs, values and styles of life, stimulate sensitivity to alternative points of view, facilitate cooperative work with students of different cultures and social strata, alert to the need for tolerance towards minority groups (e.g. gender, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation) through respect for beliefs and values of these populations.


Career Development and Special Needs

People with special needs are disadvantaged, making it imperative to develop career development practices that promote their self-determination, that is, control over the course of their life. However, the condition of disadvantage requires complementarity between the work focused on the individual and the involvement of the social network in which it is located. This involvement is justified insofar as this social network is part of the pupil's living space and, therefore, has responsibilities in maximising the equal opportunities of these populations not only through the promotion of self-determination but also through the elimination of structural and institutional barriers that limit it. In this conceptual matrix, teachers have an important role in promoting the career development of students with special needs:

Promoting students' self-determination. In this sense, all activities proposed to develop planning, curiosity, optimism, trust and cooperation remain fundamental. In fact, the condition experienced by many of these students (e.g. school failure, intellectual deficits, emotional and social integration difficulties) makes it relevant to focus on these dimensions within career development.



In addition to this type of activity, teachers still have a preponderant role in promoting self-determination of these students through the elaboration and implementation of complementary training curricula, focused, for example, on the development of personal autonomy skills, in the use of social means (e.g. use public transport, go to the post office) and knowledge of the world of work (e.g. labour legislation, hygiene and safety at work), which are essential to prepare the occupational integration of these populations.



In order to facilitate co-operative work among the different community agents, it is important for teachers to articulate the educational project of young people with the career development plan. With this purpose, teachers are a key element in the involvement of the social network when they adapt the academic curriculum to the requirements of the professional integration of these students or when they play the role of mentors, making a personalised accompaniment during the exploratory process or supporting social and professional integration of these students.

Suggestions Supporting Career Exploration

To help students explore information on education, training and occupational alternatives, teachers should encourage students to contact:

- Psychology and Guidance services for primary and secondary schools;
- Employment and Training Centres
- Centres for Vocational Education and Training;
- Institutions or entities that teach courses and training related to the area to be explored;
- Professionals;
- Family members;
- Books, brochures, leaflets and multimedia material;
- Biographies of personalities who excelled in certain domains;
- Articles from magazines and newspapers on the labour market (paper and electronic media);
- Events such as Fairs of Professions, Open Days of Institutions of Higher Education.
- Internet pages relevant to career exploration.

In activities that promote the exploration of the school and professional world, teachers should seek to be neutral, preventing their beliefs and values from school and from the world of work from negatively influencing students' choices.

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