

About this Issue

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Sometime in the 16th century, Juan Huarte de San Juan, one of first to be concerned with the professions and with what conditions are necessary in order to practice them, commented the following in his text “An examination of talents for the sciences”, regarding the “guidance” gap in his own time,: *“On account of not addressing this need, those who have no talent for theology have destroyed the Christian religion; those who are ill-suited for medicine are spoiling the health of men; and jurisprudence falls short of the perfection it could attain, due to a lack of knowing what rational power belongs to the use and good interpretation of laws”*. From that time on, vocational and professional guidance has inspired abundant research, giving rise to a theory base which is incorporated into and spread across disciplines such as Vocational Psychology, the Psychology of Work, and Professional Guidance itself, these being the most notable.

Vocational Psychology and Guidance, to the extent that their objective is the study of vocational behavior, devote their efforts to encouraging vocational development. From this perspective, aspects such as self-knowledge (aptitudes, interests, preferences, skills, competencies, values, expectations, cognitions, etc.), knowledge of the academic and professional world (academic and professional information, training and specialization tracks, professional knowledge, career options, job search strategies, etc.) and preparation for decision making have been key elements for guidance and advising. On the other hand, the speed with which changes are taking place all around us today highlights the need to prepare for change and to adapt to the dynamic which is being generated by an already complex work world. This is even truer when one takes into account that, in our day, good preparation is no guarantee of getting a good job.

In any case, we must insist on the need to design and carry out interventions, beyond those occasional acts prompted by the imminence of decision making, during the educational process itself, where individuals discover their identity, increase their vocational maturity, strengthen their performance capacity, broaden their knowledge of themselves and their surroundings, use strategies for resolving situations of uncertainty and for decision making, and in summary, are prepared to face the world of work which awaits them. It is a matter of matching up education and career guidance, since the teaching-learning process is linked to the process of developing one’s career. This will

only be possible if, on one hand, there are specialized, prepared professionals who have adequate resources and are supported by the educational community, and, on the other hand, the Educational Administration is fully aware of the need to offer this “service”.

This particular monograph, dedicated to Vocational and Professional Guidance, gathers together a set of contributions which synthesize the multi-disciplinary aspect of this area of guidance. We see approaches from the Social Psychology of Education, Diagnostic and Intervention Methods in Education, the Psychology of Work, Vocational Psychology and Educational Psychology.

To begin, Professor Rivas gives us a critical analysis of vocational behavior and advising as he sees them today in the Spanish context, based on his extensive, well-known experience in this field. Members of his research team (Rocabert, Descals and Gómez), for their part, offer some results obtained within the framework of a inter-university research project (I+D BS02001-3150) where they seek to contribute to the scientific knowledge of vocational and pre-professional behavior of university students.

From Mexico we find an interesting article by Ramírez, Canto and Rodríguez, who developed and evaluate a self-efficacy scale for career choice, inspired in the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Taylor & Betz, 1983). Here we underscore the importance of adaptation and validation of instruments when these are to be used in different contexts for which they were designed.

From the University of Lisbon, Bahía, Janeiro and Duarte present a specific study regarding career choice, delimiting the role played by personal and contextual factors in the construction of acting careers.

Professor Enrique Rafael, also from the University of Lisbon, puts forward in his article a very complete, accurate reflection about the development and management of adult careers, taking into account new challenges produced by the rapid evolution of 21st century society.

Elsewhere, Professors Donoso and Figuera focus on levels of diagnosis in professional placement and guidance. For this purpose they define the concept of socio-

labor placement and they define two levels of diagnosis related to intervention processes for insertion: macro diagnosis (labor market and social fabric) and micro diagnosis (at the personal level).

From the University of Valladolid, Professor Lucas presents a theoretical reflection on one hand, where certain factors related to vocational maturity of persons are underscored, and then describes materials used for optimizing employment insertion of university students.

Professor Repetto, jointly with Pena and Mudarra, deals with a quite timely topic, immigration and intercultural guidance. These authors highlight the importance of developing socio-emotional competencies in multi-cultural contexts and in professional contexts. Additionally, they offer a brief description of a Guidance Program in Socio-Emotional Competencies (*POCOSE*).

Professor Valls makes an interesting contribution, seeking to clarify to what extent the construct of Emotional Intelligence can serve to better explain and describe vocational behavior. He likewise warns of possible risks of a hasty application of this construct to the theory and practice of vocational psychology.

The monograph closes with the description of two ways to practically implement vocational advising. The team formed by Sanz, Gil and Marzal describe utilities using information technology to support the work of the vocational adviser at any school, specifically: databases for school counselors (BDOE), a self-evaluation instrument related to guidance (FORMAORIENTA), an electronic tool for designing and distributing questionnaires/instruments (HIA) and a collaborative web environment (WIKI for vocational guidance and advising). Martínez-Vicente offers an analysis and description of one of the most widely used instruments in vocational advising, the Self-Directed Search (SDS), focusing on its principal applications in this area.