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Life design intervention with postgraduate students: A collaborative and systemic approach¹.

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Theme: A need for change in delivery and/or access to career guidance and counselling)

What is needed to make the Lifelong Guidance a reality for everyone?

Language: English

Introduction

The working paper that we submit considers that postgraduate students are a vulnerable population, given the difficulties they have to access the labour market in the current economic context (OCDE, 2010). This situation, together with the fact that we understand the guidance as a lifelong learning process, justifies the interest in developing guidance intervention at postgraduate levels.

The message we submit has its origin in a pilot-experience developed in postgraduate studies, involving twenty-one students with a guidance profile. This initiative meets the vocational and educational training objectives in a two-fold purpose. In one hand, the interest is focused in the design, development and evaluation guidance interventions from a transformative perspective committed to the personal development and social transformation. On the other hand, to study the confluence from different systematic

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and narrative perspectives from the guidance intervention, with the conceptual approach of social transformation and design thinking methodology.

Keywords: life design, transition, design thinking, social justice, lifelong career counselling

Objectives

1) to develop a guidance prototype addressed to postgraduate students, from a Systemic Narrative perspective, applying the Design Thinking methodology; 2) to explore a guidance process linked to the training of professionals committed with social change.

Approaches

By taking a systematic approach in career development theories and interventions, allows us to take people in a perspective context. This opens up possibilities for interventions at multiple levels of people's systems and the likelihood of career practitioners intentionally undertaking socially just interventions (Arthur, Collins, Marshall & McMahon, 2013). In this process, the client becomes aware of his/her own system of influences and, as a consequence, can adopt a proactive attitude in his/her career construction.

Life design paradigm converges with the previous one because it understands that: *"The essence of the counselling process can be seen as the unfolding of the actual I: its point and sense lie in understanding how people interpret and represent reality and perform the tasks that the context presents to them, what meanings they give to it, and how such representations interact in their personal history"* (Duarte, 2014, p. 220).

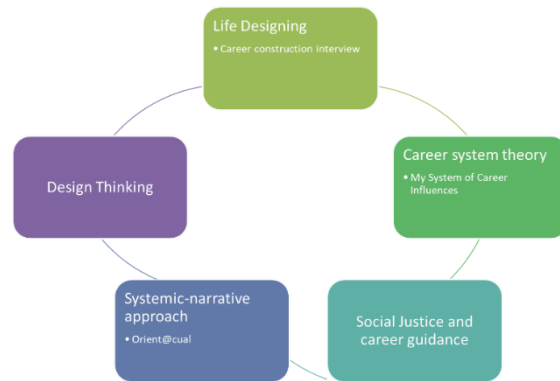


A life design process may be learned by Design Thinking methodology. Design Thinking is a person-centered process, focused on solving complex problems at different levels and themes of life (Brown, 2009). The Design Thinking methodology applied to education proposes a challenge based process, which enables student's development of divergent thinking, exploration skills, confidence, commitment, as well as communication and collaboration skills.

The process is developed in five phases:

1) Empathy; 2) Define; 3) Ideate; 4) Prototype; 5) Test/Feedback.

In our proposal (see figure 1) we have integrated in the Design Thinking process, the stages proposed by Savickas



(2012, 2016). In addition, we have included My System of Career Influences' phases (McMahon, Watson & Patton, 2013), as

Figura 1. Marco de referencia

well as some activities from Orientacual program (Romero-Rodríguez, Álvarez-Rojo, Seco-Fernández & Lugo-Muñoz, 2013). This program responds to a conception of the career project as *"an active construction process in which the client opens different channels of knowledge (reflection, intuition, emotion, silence, listening to himself) in search of the meaning of his own life experiences (academic, relational, professional ...) and takes the energy to move to the next step in their life path in a free, conscious and motivated way"* (Romero-Rodríguez & Figuera Gazo, 2016, p 172).

Methodology

It has been developed a prototype-intervention with a group of twenty-one students from the Master entitled "Vocational Training and Career Guidance" at the University of Seville (US). The designing process of intervention used by the authors of this study, uses the Design Thinking methodology.

The student's academic work, photographs, videotapes, together with the two researchers' diaries have led to some initial thoughts which are shown in this working



paper. Both researchers have been implementing the methodology with this group. We are currently in the first stages of analysis.

Skills

The skills the students must develop are: to build their professional identities; to develop resources involved in career adaptability; to combine individual and vital-professional projects with community projects.

Intervention process

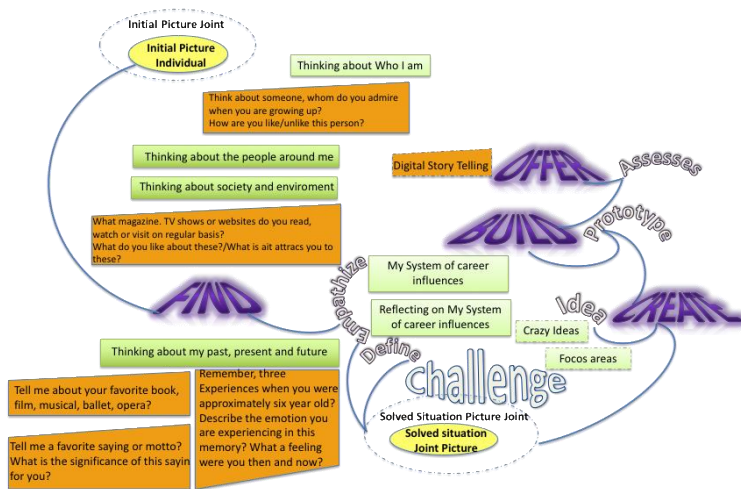


Figure 2. A collaborative and systemic approach design thinking

The training programme (see figure 2) takes place in eight working sessions of two hours long each and is organized in three stages: initial or preparatory stage, stages of guidance development or process and final guidance process and starting action. The pedagogical principles

underpinning the guidance intervention is the experience because its acts in the identification of ideas that predispose the person to be mobilized towards personal change as well as social innovation. Furthermore, enables the person recognize the process that allows identifying themselves with someone and to share feelings.

Finally, we indicated that the representation of the process is the pedagogic resource used as a mean to understand, from the "no judgment", and be the author of their own development and, accordingly, of the result achieved.



Initial or preparatory stage

The ultimate aim of this initial or preparatory stage is to achieve that the students give meaningful sense to their participation in the training-guidance program. This precondition leads to propose a program based on people's life's experiences, and also to the group of students as the basic unit of professional socialisation. This implies explaining and confessing to other people, probably unknown to them, private aspects such as personal values, beliefs, emotions, feelings, etc. that are associated with our privacy which move or paralyse us towards achieving our life goals.

Therefore, it justifies the necessity to take time in building an atmosphere of respect, distension, openness and sensitivity in creating trust and confidence in the individual, and the group, to act freely. This way the students introduced, to their culture, the principle of the no judgment or respect to what is said, proposed or done in the training-guidance process.

The techniques employed introducing participants in a experienced training process, with the aim to study life and professional Projects (LPP) and the management of their own Project, have been the *language of photography* and the *three circles*.

Stages of guidance development or process

The development of a career for social change is organized into four areas: *Find, Create, Build and Offer (FCBO)* that, in turn, articulate the guidance process in the basic elements of design thinking.

Find

This first area focuses in that the person takes awareness about himself, adjusted to his/her own circumstances, from the social environment (family, school, work and others.) and the relationship between both of them. In this regard, is needed to seek, organize and give meaning to the information, situations, feelings, etc. that can be experienced.

In the end, its about empathy or, in other words, to know to understand the reality around, to understand its relationship with this situation. This process is carried out in



successive approximations and for this purpose it used, at first, the narrative with pictures because the visual expression is a medium to think about their own situation and provide some sense (Taylor & Savickas, 2016). Its requested that narrative picture and describing their current situation, at first on an individual basis and, later, collectively. To share the reality of each person, enables the group aware of the possibility to think the current situation in terms of collective.

And, later on, The study of My System of career influences (MSCI) (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2013) allow us to look and appreciate which personal characteristics, personal relationships and the social background which could be affecting the current situation. This process is organized in four levels, the first three deepen in the personal self-knowledge, family environment and socio-political context. The fourth level, is to understand the present situation taking into consideration future projections. Its an area of synthesis that makes the person and the student group to question, "so and What now?".

This attempt concludes when the person and the group are able to imagine the solved situation, without current conditions being changed, those identified in the system of individual or collective influences, enabling it to define the challenge to achieve. At this point, the development of the proposal is to make it a collective challenge, which starts, of course, by the collective resolution. Ensuring ownership of all the participants means that they see themselves in the defined situation as well as in the challenge proposed.

Create

The purpose of this attempt is to dream up what done to reach the collective challenge. It consists of a creative process and, as such, starts with the principle of no barriers, any idea as absurd as it may seem is suitable and the time allocated to that effect is limited because now it doesn't matter how one might feel about the feasibility of the idea. Its emphasized that more ideas, the more diverse and unusual the better; Its necessary to organize them and, finally, transform them and pursue them in future projects.

Build

The third attempt focuses the attention in the need to prove the viability of the project design and its venture to carry out the proposals. Each of the alternatives gives to the



solution made a prototype, which contributes to exemplify a model of how to develop it. Its strength lies, primarily, to use other means of expression, the word gives way to pictures, designs, role playing, in short, any means capable to show the improvement to reach.

Offer

The last part of this process is carried out over two phases, the preliminary one, is used for reporting the progress achieved and to test it, the developed prototype made by other participants in the guidance process. Those who value the idea must see if possible, with the proposal made, to advance from the actual situation to the proposed one. Its value lies in moving from the world of ideas into action, recognising that the determining factors that might be affecting it. This principle is essential if we take into account the creative process that has been undertaken collectively.

Final guidance process and starting action

In this stage, the person and the group, identifies that the solution to the situation is in itself, as well as what he has to do to move towards the desired situation. This is also an evaluation stage in the process.

Conclusions

The career building process reinforces the idea that the guidance potential is amplified when its developed with the interaction with other people and creates collective projects. In this respect sharing thoughts and talking about careers for those who are at a crossroad in their lives, seems to be an ideal scenario to listen to their thoughts and create a collective conscience. This aspect is crucial if each individual talks about his/her career in different ways but the common ground is that all of them feel paralysed for the same reasons depending the vital moment they are experiencing at the time. To understand and share what are the social and personal circumstances which makes human beings paralyse at this moment helps them to develop and use their personal resources. To evoke an alternative solution managing your own resources and experiences and choosing a way towards change, is the way to personal liberation.



Ultimately, it implies investing in the management of emotions and the practice the detachment of predicted solutions to favour adaptability.

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