

## Career guidance from an educational perspective: a proposal within universities

*Giovanna Campanella, Università degli Studi Guglielmo Marconi, Rome, Italy*

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**ABSTRACT.** This article discusses the importance of guidance within university education and proposes a good-practice model for helping students to transition from university to employment. The analysis arises from educational approach to guidance, that over the last few years is providing an alternative to mainly psycho-technical and diagnostic approach, and conceives guidance practice as a process that is cross-functional concerning students' educational path.

The educational-guiding practice aims at raising the subject's metacognitive awareness in order to make him/her able to orient him/herself autonomously. Hence, guidance turns into a choice education/education in choice. The individual, who has to orient him/herself, and the guidance are strictly connected on the one hand to the issue of the overall "growth" of the individual and on the other hand, to the issue of his/her lifelong learning.

To the present day, the practices developed within universities, maybe due to an inconsistent national policy, are somehow inadequate or incomplete, mainly for three reasons: they are purely informational (on the working world, on the degree programs, on the professional opportunities); they mainly focus on diagnostic interventions (based on the linear relationship between aptitudes and interests); they are run by clinical specialists (unrelated to university and education).

The model proposed in this article seeks to overcome such limitations by promoting practices aimed at: 1) making information preparatory for the whole educational path; 2) making didactics more sensitive to students' educational and learning needs. The relationship with the non academic world (namely, the manufacturing world) is essential to make students responsible for their educational choice.

**KEYWORDS:** *Career guidance, Educational guidance, Transition to employment/working world, University guidance*

## Career guidance from a historical perspective

The current debate on the development of career guidance is the field of Industrial and Organizational psychology and the development of a careful and proactive reflection about the effectiveness of career guidance services in educational contexts, like schools and universities, and about operators' training, is due to researchers that belong to I-O psychology (Soresi, 2000; Nota 1999; Petruccioli, 2005). The lack of a dialogue with typically sociological disciplines (like sociology of education and work) represents serious limitations of the reference literature and the absence of integration does not allow facing the debate from an interdisciplinary point of view. A historical survey on the way reflections on career guidance have developed seems to be right and proper in order to provide the topic with a practical framework and to understand interpretative aspects within university contexts. On the one hand, the guidance practice tries to meet the needs of the individual and on the other hand, the ones of the economic system. Its action requires tools, which firstly encourage young people to choose a job consistent with their personal skills and secondly ensure an increasing production (Viglietti, 1981; Di Nubila, 1990) Thus, the first phase of the history of guidance as a professional practice is called aptitude-diagnostics (1910-1930): the attempt to put "the right person in the right place", namely to find a kind of coincidence between individual attitudes and job-requirements, is based on a rigid human model that consists of behavioral characteristics and of a certain "quantity" of cognitive and behavioral fixed skills, that are quantifiable and measurable. At the same time, such a theoretical model gives the world comforting connotations of stability, familiarity and predictability. In the late 1930s of the last century, the guidance phase called affective-characterological (1930-1950) undermines the previous model, starting from the results from some research on job performance: they show that in case of two people displaying the same aptitude for a certain job, the higher the interest, the better the performance. Therefore, the concept of personal interest begins to assume importance within the process of school-job choice and gradually replaces the concept of aptitude; the focus change results in new attention to motivational and affective aspects of the individual. Therefore, a new psychological approach to career guidance starts developing and more attention is paid to the characteristics of the individual who is looking for a job (Viglietti, 1981). Despite the significant change in terms of theoretical perspective, the two phases of the historical evolution of the concept of career guidance considered so far, are based on: 1) a common idea of an individual that is basically immutable, consisting of fixed aptitudes, interests or personality traits, that, through the use of tests, can be detected and used to figure out the most suitable job or profession for the individual; 2) a common idea that the individual, or a part of his/hers, is subject matter of the guidance process; 3) a common guidance aimed at matching individuals and jobs at a specific moment in life, the moment of choice. Since the 1950s, as a consequence of the psychoanalytic theories, the concept of work as a source of satisfaction of human needs starts developing, resulting in the transition to a clinical-diagnostic approach (1945-1960): in this phase, what is more relevant is the choice of a job that could better satisfy the essential needs of the individual that will carry it out. The professional profile of the guidance counselor is mainly affected by the figure of the clinical psychologist. Living conditions and socially shared ideas becomes less relevant, while the motivational aspect turns becomes the core of job search. In this regard, Padre Gemelli, the founding father and director of the first psychophysiology laboratory for the selection of the army, argued that "what to take into account are inclinations, not interests. Inclinations express the essential needs of human personality, and no professional success is achieved unless job and

inclinations match” (Pombeni, 1990 p. 9). Until the 1950s, as we can guess, career guidance theories were mainly based on psychologistic models while career guidance practice was a matter solely for psychologists: this course attracts criticism primarily from sociology (Pombeni, 1990), about little consideration psychologists give to the environment as a factor conditioning the individuals in building their professional interests. According to sociology, basically economic factors and social environment influence people and their attitudes. From a sociological perspective, career guidance practice would be as an attempt to rationalize the relationship between supply and demand. In the 1960s, some of those we have considered in terms of limits of previous approaches are overtaken: the personal-maturational phase (1955-1980) turns into an idea of dynamic career guidance where the individual is at the center of the guidance process. It begins to outline the possibility that individuals are able to determine their own social and professional integration, so the guidance practice increasingly resembles a self-orientation process: individuals are involved in the construction of their own work experience by interacting dynamically with an ever more complex reality. At this stage, some fundamental assumptions that nowadays still drive career guidance interventions, can be identified: 1) the development is a continuing process that accompanies the whole life of an individual, from dependence to autonomy; 2) it is possible to identify specific stages in the progress of certain developmental goals; 3) development results in an increase in the individual overall maturity/growth; 4) transition is a condition of psychological and social reorganization that individuals face to tackle critical events (Super, 1969; 1953). Thus, the main purpose of career guidance is to promote individual awareness of job career and to facilitate choice processes in times of transition. Career guidance turns into an education for choice: the center of the process is the individual who need guiding and the career guidance action is closely correlated to the issue of the global emancipation of the person and to his/her permanent education. According to the last perspective, the goal that career guidance should pursue, becomes twofold: on the one hand, the personal growth of the individual, with respect to his/her autonomy; on the other hand, the individual's integration into the social (and professional) and therefore to its changes. The individual becomes active with respect to the search of his/her own path as evidence of his/her specific need of self-appraisal. Since the early 1980s and beyond, the myths of the psycho-aptitude approach, a meaningful renewal of the conceptual framework has conceived career guidance as a recursive process and as a set of focused professional activities. It has fostered interventions aimed at promoting choices that fit personal aptitudes, social interest and job outlook. Over the same period, career guidance has turned into a tool of active employment policy and a comprehensive reflection on the different users, functions, structures and participants. Thus, career guidance has become an essential part of the educational process, a «permanent educational mode to promote individuals' advancement according to their professional choice and to an appropriate integration into social life», a unitary process that becomes part of the educational context (family, school and society), as a mode of continuing education supporting self-enhancement (awareness of one's own current status and future potentials), depending on job satisfaction (individual and social), on the promotional development of the individual (in terms of enhancement of his/her professionalism) and on social harmony (balance between labor supply and demand), in a context of dynamic adaptation to the changing social and professional reality (Viglietti, 1989).

## Career guidance as a learning process

The new scenario described in the previous historical considerations, results in career guidance being considered from a “globalist” and multidisciplinary approach that takes into account the individual as a whole and socio-cultural and environmental factors which influence individuals (Amoretti, Rania, 2005; Grimaldi, 2002; 2003; 2003b) . Career guidance endorses a strictly didactic perspective connected to processes of formal and informal education. As a matter of fact, only a new definition of education can fit the new considerations on career guidance.

So, if learning at school is implemented mainly through formal knowledge and resources provided by each branch of knowledge (through effective strategies to design and implement the educational relationship - what and how), according to the new approach of active guidance, teaching should focus on some declarative and procedural knowledge. Job-oriented knowledge as well as logical and methodological procedures, are fundamental to intentionally support acquisition of cognitive and methodological skills, together with metacognitive and personal/social competences.

The goal is to allow students to properly process the information and proceed in a sensible manner, to better understand themselves and become aware of their skills, to perceive their competence and control their own attitude and learning, but also to draw upon abstract thought to mentally project forward and identify the path most suitable for them to consider and start planning (Amoretti, Rania, 2005; Isfol, 2003; 2003 b; 2003 c).

This involves the choice of teaching methods that are adequate for the class (teaching strategies and techniques/personalized learning) and of appropriate tools to support the learning process (design of experiments/activities/learning exercises) since didactics, in order to provide real guidance, should firstly promote effective learning in order to cross branches of knowledge and acquire from them resources useful for life and for making comparisons between their characteristics and the individual’s interests and attitudes. Students should be actively involved in an endless dialectic process between processes of self-observation, self-direction and self-assessment. The most relevant novelty of metacognitive approach relies, on the one hand on its attempt to have processes of self-regulation “come out”, by making them explicit in their performance and with respect to their function, and on the other hand, on teaching students more active and effective methods to monitor their cognitive processes. This might mean making students aware of what happens when they learn and of the reasons why it happens: metacognitive approach tends to develop the ability to directly “manage” one’s cognitive processes, by directing them actively according to one’s personal assessments and operational instructions. As a matter of fact, the learning process per se is constructive and means re-elaborating and connecting each new piece of information to the pre-existing ones which, in turn, are rearranged according to each new content.

## Turning career guidance into practice: Italian universities

How has Italian university responded to the new challenges of educational guidance?

Italian universities follow a threefold guidance activity that reproduces the three main stages of students’ path: entry, progress and exit. Before enrolling, students get in contact with universities through informative material, the internet, initiatives and meetings – both at university and at school – aimed at making students’ choice informed. Regarding the entry guidance, university provides

information and advice about the choice, not only about educational and didactic opportunities, but also in terms of services offered to students.

About progress guidance, namely at university, universities provide tutoring guidance activities, firstly to bridge the distance between entry knowledge and standards required by the studies, secondly to facilitate course attendance and enhance learning, with the ultimate goal of reducing dispersion and failure. This service allows students to organize their university studies better, among other things, by facilitating the completion of the curriculum, solving some bureaucratic difficulties and helping students, especially in case of freshmen, not feel out of place in the corridors of the university. In addition, rules, as well, identify precise ways to support students by providing them with assistance throughout their studies. For this purpose, art. 13, par. 2 and 3, law no. 341/90 on university system underlines that: "Tutoring aims at guiding and supporting students throughout their study, at making them actively involved in the training process, at removing obstacles that prevent them from successful attendance, in particular through initiatives coherent with the needs and attitudes of individual students. Tutoring services cooperate with organizations supporting the right to study and with representatives of students, giving their contribution to the overall needs of students' cultural education and broader participation in university activities." Actually, these practices focus on a merely informative path of entry and progress assistance.

As far as follow up guidance concerns, support to transition to work can be provided through expert advice about designing professional projects and starting internship and placement experiences. It is pretty frequent that such activities provide students with support even after school, accompanying them as recent graduates, in finding an appropriate job.

Career guidance, commonly called Placement, is relatively recent as a practice in Italian universities, as until the last few years, they aimed at training students in view of the degree, but not in view of the next job search phase. The Treu law (1997) and the labor reform (the Biagi Law<sup>1</sup> introduced in Italy in 2003), are clear signs of change within universities. Along with other public and private participants, universities mediate labor supply and demand.

Placement from Italian universities responds to different needs. Some of them have an historical explanation for the development of Career Guidance (section I) – connected to the transformation of the world of work – some other refer to broader processes of change.

On the one hand, the transition from a public welfare system to a welfare society, that is to a society that takes care of its citizens, gives people a wider range of choice and service providers increase in the spirit of subsidiarity; on the other hand, the belief that training, information and ongoing dialogue between universities and the production system can be a valuable contribution to new possibilities. Despite guidance and placement offices are now pretty common in Italian universities and their initiatives are worthy and evolved in university-to-work transition (Adapt, 2011; Garofani, Spattini, 2001), it seems that few steps have been taken to adopt the educational guidance approach that has been previously outlined.

Several empirical studies and monitoring reports on university placement services (ISFOL, 2003; ADAPT, 2014)<sup>2</sup> show that tools and services for students are not homogeneous and that several

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1 By law 197/1997 (the so-called TREU Package), Italy favors European guidelines on employment (EES - European Employment Strategy). Universities become active participants in the labor market, institutions to activate training and guidance courses and work-related programmes. The reform of the labor market introduced in 2003 by the Biagi Law (L 30/03) completes the picture of university intermediation.

2 Empirical investigations on career guidance and placement offices in Italian Universities have consisted in

practices are completely ineffective from the employment point of view (ADAPT, 2014).

In cataloging different surveyed activities, it is possible to identify: preliminary general interviews; advice and assistance in drafting a curriculum vitae, in processing a career plan and in finding out tools for active job search; CV database management; management of online boards of company announcements; matching between companies staff research and students and graduates profiles; arrangement of company visits, career days, job corner (company information stands), company presentations; provision and administrative management of internships.

These services are entirely carried out by only few Italian universities that have considerable experience in this field (universities in Lombardy and Lazio are the most efficient and complete), as universities often carry out only some of the activities and services above-described. In addition, they are made in different ways depending on the internal organization of each university.

The analysis of the information gathered - configuration of offices logistics and the nature of services - has showed the mission and the approach behind each single choice made by universities. In particular, some contexts revealed an integration between guidance and placement activities, where University/company matching is meant as a continuing process, not limited to the moment of labor market entry. Other universities instead show a more traditional approach, that operates at faculty level without central coordination. However, the concept of placement is still limited to the logic of the intersection between company research and students' or graduates' curricula.

The process of integration with the world of work, aimed at a direct and continuing dialogue with local institutions, has not been carried out yet, so that an essential aspect of guidance goes missing. In some relevant cases, like Milan and Rome, Placement service provides targeted professional assistance but it remains a practice carried out as the degree approaches.

Thus, Placement service, even if it seems to be efficient, is a guidance practice aimed at providing employment. So a kind of assistance and information that takes place at the time of choosing.

In brief, the guidance model that has developed in Italy, shows a preliminary problematic aspect: the three types of guidance do not assure continuity and integration that guidance itself should provide to ensure individuals' development and growth (Callini, 1997).

We had the possibility to realize that career guidance is an educational moment with a double value: on the one hand, it fosters the harmonization of the relationships between educational systems and world of work; on the other hand, it promotes interventions and services aimed at supporting individuals' professional and personal project (Perucca, 2005) There is no doubt that in order to face the mutability of work market and the need of flexibility that often results in phenomena of job insecurity, it is necessary to turn to adequate forms of protection and to reinforce people's ability to interpret changes as opportunities (Savickas, 2005)<sup>3</sup>, making them critical and providing them with

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mapping offices through access to universities and single faculties websites. In this way, information related to career guidance and placement activities, as well as news about contacts and locations, has been collected. Then, it has been transferred to the interactive map of university placement ([www.adapttech.it/placement](http://www.adapttech.it/placement))

<sup>3</sup> In the Information Age, according to Savickas, personal proactivity and professional adaptability are more and more requested; namely, the combination of attitudes and skills that have to do with one's personal inclination to plan one's own professional future and the tendency to be adaptable to accidents and unexpected requests. A flexible individual is able to modify a series of personal characteristics: competences, skills, attitudes, and behavior on the purpose of meeting (and perhaps of predicting) requests deriving from the context he/she is in. Flexibility is mainly determined by individual differences, so guidance follows the way of providing, in a never ending process starting from School, opportunities to achieve guidance competences useful to plan one's own future according to realistic goals. Thus, it is necessary to underline the strategic relevance of guidance from an educational perspective. Guidance might foster the development of proactive

self-assessment competences. Finally, in the field of career guidance, technological developments have great relevance since they are revolutionizing work market. We cannot ignore the fact that nowadays, global innovation is also digital: not only are technological instruments changing, but jobs are too. Not only do the ways of communication change, but also the way we modify the environment around us, starting with investments and ending with career guidance. Therefore, how can this new approach be well accepted within structures, like schools and universities, that are used to basing their principles of identity and their organization on teaching dimension and logics and on completely formal learning that depends on teaching?

### Some considerations

This question is quite controversial and in order to have a clearer idea, it is fair enough to mention three provisions implemented in Italy over the last four years:

1. Agreement between Government, Regional and local authorities concerning the definition of the national system on lifelong guidance, file number 152 / CU – December 20, 2012.
2. Agreement between Government, Regional and local authorities on the document providing the definition of the national guidelines on lifelong guidance drafted by the Inter-institutional Group provided for in art. 4 of the Agreement on the definition of the national system lifelong guidance, October 20, 2012, file number 136 / CU – December 5, 2013.
3. Ministry of Education national guidelines for lifelong guidance – February 19, 2014.

In particular, point 1 refers to the 2012 Agreement that, in accordance with Italian and European legislation, states that career guidance “might influence planning and employability of the individual and economic and social factors of change”, “is an integral part of education, vocational training and employment” and “involves specific skills that could underpin the choices throughout all of life.” In this regard, it is necessary to “support each individual to make informed choices” and to implement “a national strategy on guidance in order to overcome the fragmentation of interventions and policies carried out” by the entities in charge (schools, universities, local authorities, regions).

As far as point 2 is concerned, it refers to the 2013 Agreement and the “National Guidelines on guidance” that give universities, and educational institutions in general, a central role in creating integrated local systems relating to guidance. They also provide operational lines to develop good practices<sup>4</sup> such as:

- a. Guidance didactics: to promote the development of a proactive behavior in the individual (educational aspect).
- b. Career Information: to know and interpret the world of work.
- c. Accompaniment: to monitor and assist the individual during the transition or the process of choice.
- d. Career guidance counseling: to support people’s planning through specific professional tools

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attitudes in building educational and professional paths, and promote social inclusion, gender equality and active citizenship.

4 The document identifies interventions and devices more responsive to people’s needs.

such as Competence Assessment.

e. System actions: to use different tools within a single project.

f. Multilevel Governance: to “share decision-making processes” and strategies that “at both political-institutional and techno-operational levels” allow “integrated interventions of guidance”.

As far as point 3 is concerned, namely Ministry of Education national guidelines for lifelong guidance, they represent a further advance on 2013 guidelines within the school system; they present relevant observations which, here, we cannot mention that only few key points starting from the consideration that they are on the one hand in the continuity of the previous legislation, and on the other hand characterized by several crucial steps forward and well aware of the “centrality of the school system. As a matter of fact, school is conceived as a unique place where young people acquire and enhance their basic and transversal skills that are necessary for developing their own identity, autonomy, decision making and planning. Without this ‘core’ of skills, it is difficult to think of successfully implement later processes of transition, consulting, professionalization, change and further learning”.

As we have examined during this discussion, although not exhaustively due to space limitations, these measures are in the rearguard of legislative processes launched during the last twenty years. It means that attention to them is constant and that the issue pertaining guidance is yet to develop in practice.

From the theoretical references we have examined, career guidance is given an educational role in developing individual autonomy and simultaneously in facilitating paths towards work integration. But, in contrast with a well-articulated and scientifically well established regulatory framework (Pombeni, 1990; Grimaldi, 2002) with detailed references to the practices to develop in terms of career guidance (as the abovementioned indications have highlighted), no integrated operating model effectively supports students or graduates in the process of employment integration making a contribution to the growth of people in training.

Today, basically all Italian universities can provide informative services (operational line b) and in some exemplary cases effective career counseling services, such as Rome and Milan (operational lines c) and d). It is not easy to identify good system actions (operational line e) and effective multi-level governance (operational line f). The relationship and the interaction with the world of work is ensured through provisions of internship, career days and/or company meetings but not through an open dialogue with the local entrepreneurial fabric. In addition, the educational aspect of career guidance is never take into account in monitoring and assessing placement services (ADAPT, 2011; Garofano, Spattini, 2011).

At this point, this paper aims at providing an operational interpretation of guidance, starting from some personal and direct considerations I could make as a teacher and guidance coordinator, since I held those positions for about 10 years at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Rome La Sapienza. My first consideration refers to students’ mindset and their choice of studies<sup>5</sup> (Campanella, 2005;

<sup>5</sup> This consideration results from direct confrontation with hundreds of students of Social Sciences during career guidance activities and on occasion of monitoring and assessing surveys I carried out for the career guidance service and for my doctoral thesis (years 2007-2011). In particular, we could analyze over the years, about 3000 cases (students and graduates of the faculty of Sociology, in different courses) that allowed us to develop some *focus group* (1000 cases in all) and to carry out individual interview about career guidance.

2011). In most cases, students' choice (at least, for those students that are interested in social disciplines) is not work-related. They make their decision according to their own educational desires and preferences, or according to their personal tastes ("I chose sociology because I was interested in social sciences in general"). Professional achievement comes into play when students are completing their studies or are getting their degree. On few occasions, later work integration is linked to the internship experience. And in any case, students start thinking about their own employability once they have chosen their course of study.

My second observation concerns the way instructors and administrative staff conceive career guidance within universities and courses of study. Career guidance has no connection with education and training. It seems to be on the side of academic courses, often centrally coordinated by universities, and in most cases managed by the administrative staff (non-teaching employees). Despite interventions on policy and reforms of education system, career guidance is kept at an informative level or at an advising level during the choice.

My third and final consideration refers to the attention paid to guidance didactics (or in other more common terms active learning/teaching). There are no specific studies on the development of guidance didactics within academic courses. Its importance is prominent in literature on secondary schools educational sector (Amoretti, 2005; Girotti, 2006; Mura, 2005; Zanniello, 2014), but there is no doubt about its importance within academic courses. When we talk about guidance didactics, we explicitly refer to the general theory of training guidance (see second paragraph). It is necessary to consider all those intentional actions aimed at developing a mindset, a guidance method, to build and enhance general guidance competences. In other words, all those interventions aimed at providing students with analytical skill that allow them to make responsible choices and to develop medium and long-term plans (Amoretti, 2005; Sangiorgi, 2005; Marostica, 2006).

This third consideration could be connected to the first one. As literature of reference argues, in fact, students' passive attitude, or anyway an approach that is scarcely pro-active regarding choices or paths of employment integration, might depend on a passive and non-participatory learning, that does not allow students to gain guidance skills necessary to foster their path of choice.

The operational proposal that I shall define below, cannot and will not be able to be considered unless the teaching staff (or those leading the teaching staff) is sensitive to these issues, maybe as they ignore them or simply because they do not think they are relevant to the purpose of students' educational success.

### **A model of integrated guidance: a practical proposal**

In theoretical perspective, if guidance is not episodic over a lifetime, but, on the contrary, is a life-long continuum, the guidance process has to find its place within students' studies. Thus, career guidance should not be managed by non-teaching staff but should be integrated to the studies. The model assumption is then envisaged from a local point of view within university studies and universities have to monitor career guidance carried out by Faculties and/or by single degree programs. An office, devoted to planning, sets annual curricular and extracurricular activities (integrated guidance center - see Figure 1) in relation to students' training needs. From this perspective, it is possible to ensure a

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About 170 students completed a questionnaire on effectiveness and evaluation of guidance practices and work experiences. The collected results and considerations are the outcomes of a professional experience in direct contact with students and of the use of 'participant observation' as a method of study and analysis.

kind of participatory learning where students can better understand their choice. During university enrollment, interviews and students/instructors discussions are crucial to define educational areas to explore during the academic year. A database and an entry questionnaire should ensure information collection and analysis over time, also in view of an overall assessment of the degree program in general. Traditional academic teaching would be implemented by a vocational training course (see Figure 1) defined according to students' study and research needs. Workshops, career seminars, and curricular internships should be designed on the base of a continuing and participated dialogue between students, instructors and participants from the world of work (company professionals and training tutors). Sharing teaching among institutional and professional participants ensures the acquisition of specific skills and techniques connected to the world of work and would increase students' awareness of their educational choices in advance of degree.

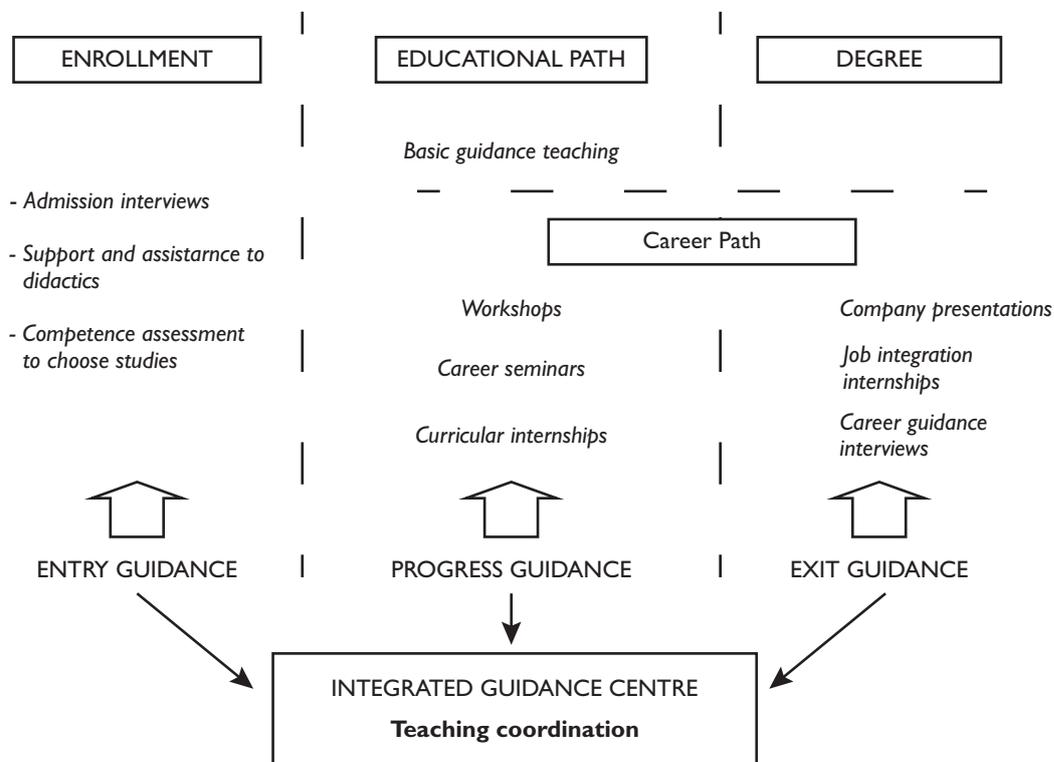


Figure 1. Model of integrated guidance for degree courses

One of the most relevant features of exit guidance is the active involvement of external agencies to implement educational curricular internships related to degree programs. It is a fairly common practice in Italy (Almalaurea, 2011). As a matter of fact, Italian placement offices (see third paragraph) provide internship opportunities, more or less homogeneously, and organize career exhibitions quite frequently. Yet, these activities often have no connections with the degree programs, just because they are managed from a central position and not directly from a degree programs level. This service can be ensured in quantitative terms (according to the amount of events that universities can guarantee) but not in qualitative terms (according to students' specific needs). Integrated guidance and teaching

programming center should integrate students' interests and educational needs and techniques of the world of work from a mutual learning perspective.

## Conclusions

This work is part of theoretical considerations on educational/training guidance, that is a field of multidisciplinary and multi-purpose analysis. Dealing with this subject means providing it with a broad and complex framework. We have not been able to be exhaustive within this paper but we have tried to stress, in practical terms, the importance of the educational dimension in academic practices.

In an ever-changing socio-political context like the current one, guidance is now more than ever a challenge for education and the climax of every educational and training process, but also a strategic element to coordinate employment and social policy. A method to tackle current crucial issues cannot be only notional, but has to take into account the individual as a whole, by promoting his/her passions, feelings and creativity. Solving problems is important, but even more important is being able to identify problems which are worth spending energies. I believe this observation might be a good starting point to enter the questions we have posed in our analysis. Guidance speaks the language of socialization by focusing - at least theoretically - on self-discovery, on the ability to relate to others, on the acquisition of planning competencies, on the development of responsibility and self-efficacy, on the promotion of one's own knowledge and skills, on the ability to understand and interact with the environment, on the ability to use personal resources to handle life's challenges. These elements are undoubtedly significant in personal development and then might support the acquisition of specific skills in other areas, such as the professional one, and certainly help individuals also during transition from school to work. Throughout this process, Universities have a fundamental role.

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