



# METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE TO CAREER GUIDANCE



1. Definition of career guidance.....	3
2. Career guidance in EU law .....	5
3. Career guidance in Italian law .....	11
4. Career guidance in Slovenian law.....	17
5. Beneficiaries of career guidance activities .....	20
6. Career guidance provider.....	23
7. Providers of training interventions for workers.....	27
8. Providers of training interventions on guidance .....	32
9. Management of career guidance lessons.....	34
a. Competence assessment.....	39
b. Assessment techniques.....	46
c. Potential evaluation.....	54
d. Guidance interview .....	66
e. Career coaching.....	82



## 1. Definition of career guidance

The definition of career guidance is extremely many-sided and is more precise according to the nation in which it is adopted and of the aims of counselling.

From an historical point of view, the main approaches to counselling are:

- comportamental approach, based on a pedagogic point of view, so counselling is more directive and impositive<sup>1</sup>;
- constructivistic approach, based on the comprehension and the development of proactive and positive behaviours in individuals<sup>2</sup>;
- existential approach, based on relationships among counsellor and individual, looking at the people from an olistic point of view (not only working and study experiences but also problems and successes had in the life)<sup>3</sup>;
- psychodynamic approach, more linked to psychoanalysis theories on peoples development<sup>4</sup>;

---

<sup>1</sup> VON GLASERSFELD E. (1988), *Una introduzione al costruttivismo radicale* in P. Watzlawick (a cura di), *La realtà inventata*, Feltrinelli, Milano.

<sup>2</sup> ELLIS A. (1962), *Reason and emotions in psychotherapy*, Lyle Stuart, NewYork; BATESON G. (1976, nuova ed. 2000), *Verso un'ecologia della mente*, Adelphi, Milano; BATESON G. (1984), *Mente e natura*, Adelphi, Milano; BATESON G., BATESON M.C. (1989), *Dove gli angeli esitano. Verso un'epistemologia del sacro*, Adelphi, Milano.

<sup>3</sup> ROGERS C.R. (1951), *La terapia centrata sul cliente*, tr. it. Martinelli, Firenze, 1970.; ROGERS C.R. (1971), *Psicoterapia di consultazione Nuove idee nella pratica clinica e sociale*, Astrolabio, Roma; ROGERS C.R. (1970), *I gruppi di incontro*, tr. it. Astrolabio, Roma, 1976; ROGERS C.R. (1971), *Psicoterapia di consultazione. Nuove idee nella pratica clinica e sociale*, Astrolabio, Roma.

<sup>4</sup> CLARKSON P. (2004), *Gestalt Counseling. Per una consulenza psicologica proattiva nella relazione d'aiuto*, Sovera, Roma; CARKHUFF R., BERENSON B.G. (1967), *Beyond counselling and therapy*, Holt, Rinehart &Winston, New York; NOONAN E. (1997), *Counseling psicodinamico con adolescenti e giovani adulti*, Idelson Gnocchi, Napoli.



- integrated approach, that tries to cope all the focus of the previous approaches, defining different methods according to different environments and situations<sup>5</sup>.

Consequently, there are two main ways to look at guidance:

- vocational approach, based on the focus on work and/or study and considering the professional life of individuals like a separated and well-defined part of people's life;
- existential approach, based on the fact that even if people can make differences among professional and private life, there is always a moment, like transition moments, in which these two parts are combined and there is no possibility to make good and effective guidance without considering these two parts.

Generally, in Italian literature there is no strict difference among “guidance” and “career guidance”: career is meant in some books starting from the school period, choosing the University path that will lead to a particular specialization in some professions, in some other books more attention is paid on guidance as help to face period of unemployment (as also told in the Italian Legislative Decree of the 21st April 2000, n. 181 – see down).

Generally, we can say that career guidance is a complex mix of activities aimed to follow a person from the study period to the enter in the job market, sometimes as guide needed in some transition periods. The focus of this activity, in fact, is the individual starting a career guidance path, seen not only as professional, but in many ways.

In this meaning, career guidance means help the individuals to gain self-consciousness, understanding the work, social and economic reality in which they move. This self-consciousness is used for relations and interventions with the reality, to support growth and the development of competencies, needed to define autonomously personal and professional aims, coherent with the environment, moreover to create and re-elaborate a life project and supporting related choices.

Guidance leads to autonomy as basis to let people move in a complex society without guarantee. So it's completely in the integral education and training of a person meant as

---

<sup>5</sup> ASPIC AA.VV. (1999), *Il Counseling Rivista integrazione nelle psicoterapie e nel counseling* n. 5/6; AXELSON J.A. (1993), *Counseling and development in a multicultural society*, Brooks/Cole, Pacific Grove, CA.



permanent learning, “the attention that is full expression of a person’s identity, professionalism and vocation according to the environment in which he’s living in”<sup>6</sup>.

The guidance counselor can help in building professional paths fully effective in training and professional field, giving three kind of services:

- ❖ guidance information, that means to give the users information managed on paper or multimedia; these information can be mediated by an expert or achieved in autonomy,
- ❖ training guidance, that means short training moments that, for instance, can be about techniques and strategies to look for a job, local job market, capacities and motivation analysis,
- ❖ guidance counseling, an help relation for individuals to ease self consciousness, the discover of attitudes, capacities, interests and motivations to build a professional project and to focus tools and ways to realize it.

In Job Centres, guidance is a counselling activity for people, for their conscious guidance to training and entering the job market, and for companies. Activities are individual interviews, focus on expectations, preferences and needs of the users, capabilities, attitudes, professionalism and competencies, focus and proposal of strategies for entering job market, address of users to opportunities given by policies, measures and plans for work and promotion of internships, dedicated services of counselling for disabled and weak targets<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. Career guidance in EU law

Since the '60, EU showed great interest in guidance, not as isolated issue, but as a step to promote education, training and job policies<sup>8</sup>. This interest is evidenced by the fact that this

---

<sup>6</sup> Source: Isfol, (a cura di F. Gergo-D. Pavoncello), 2004, Accreditemento delle sedi orientative. Glossario

<sup>7</sup> Source: Italia Lavoro – Documenta Banca dati documentale sul lavoro -  
[http://bancadati.italialavoro.it/BDD\\_WEB/prodotto.do?DOCUMENTA](http://bancadati.italialavoro.it/BDD_WEB/prodotto.do?DOCUMENTA)

<sup>8</sup> Here there are the main steps:

issue is managed in the European Commission by Directorate-General for Education and Culture and Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Department.

An important step in defining policies about education, training and guidance was made in Lisbon, in 2000, when the European Council fixed some indefeasible issues, that focused in education, training and job the main levers to achieve the goal of making European geopolitical environment more competitive and dynamic. This ambitious goal can be achieved through offering to EU citizens come chances of lifelong learning, because these could activate an economy based on knowledge, able to be flywheel for a sustainable economic growth, with more and better job and a better social cohesion.

Lisbon conclusions are fixed in a strategic document, the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000) that in the Key Message n. 5, named Rethinking guidance and counselling, puts as indefeasible goal to “*Ensure that everyone can easily access good quality information and advice about learning opportunities throughout Europe and throughout their lives*”. It’s clear that, in this context, guidance is a “*service permanently accessible to everyone*”, without any difference among professional school and personal guidance, and it’s stated that guidance services must not be focused anymore on supply, but it has to take in account demand, based on users needs and requirements.

First activity to support policies for training, education and guidance was the launch of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, strategic document on which all the funding actions in the field are based.

At the end of 2001, UE Commission spread the Communication named “Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality” in which main aim is to promote and to spread culture of

- 
- ❖ 1963 – definition of permanent agreements on information and professional counselling,
  - ❖ 1966 – EU Commission Recommendation (66/484/CEE) for promoting development of professional guidance activities for young and adults through continuous, integrated actions and adequate to users needs,
  - ❖ 1993 – White Book “Growth, competitiveness, employment” by Jacques Delors, on strategicity of lifelong training,
  - ❖ 1995 – White Book “Teaching and Learning: to knowledge society” by Edith Cresson in which is defined the relevance of lifelong learning about training and guidance activities, settling basis for lifelong guidance.

lifelong learning through guidance and advice services, whose aim is to promote and ease access to training. Straight consequence of this decision is the creation of a network among the guidance systems coherent with a supply in lifelong learning developed at any level and for all the actors of the labour market.

Following the intention to carry out fully the meaning of “guidance”, since 2001, EU, through international bodies, like CEDEFOP (European Center for VET development), ETF (European Training Foundation) and OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and World Bank, realized many researches on guidance, to understand its implementation in the various countries.

In 2002 European Commission created the Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance to have a support in addressing the implementation of development activities about guidance policies.

To press the member states in investing in guidance, at the beginning of 2003 was spread the Communication named “Investing efficiently in education and training: an imperative for Europe”. In this document the member States were solicited in creating strategies useful to reduce the distance among training supply and needs from the labour market, through activities to decrease school abandon and to ease entering the labour market or re-entering formal education system.

As support in recognizing the situation on guidance and to spread the results and the opportunities created by the Lifelong Learning Programme, in 2003 Lifelong Guidance community was created in CEDEFOP (actually this community is closed). The community had two main goals to achieve: on one hand to encourage the exchange of experiences and information among the stakeholders for guidance, as apprentices, researchers, experts and decision makers responsible for developing guidance actions in training and job field; on the other hand to give the chance to look at the progresses in implementation of Council’s Recommendations on lifelong guidance in 4 main fields: widening of the access to guidance services, shift the focus to let every citizen achieve self-management skills, building more effective systems for guidance through cooperation among many stakeholders.

In May 2004, the UE Council adopted the Resolution on strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of Guidance throughout life<sup>9</sup>. In particular, the Resolution recognizes that

---

<sup>9</sup> Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe, document n. 8448/04 EDUC 89 SOC 179



in many EU countries policies, systems and practices in guidance are inadequate and settles 4 priorities:

1. to make guidance services and activities accessible for all citizens, independently by their age and with particular care for people at risk
2. to promote in the citizens the development of guidance skills
3. to ensure the quality of services and products in guidance
4. to strength at regional and national level the structures for developing and coordinating guidance activities through the involvement of all the actors interested in guidance.

In 2004 OECD published the report “Career Guidance and Public Policy”, that underlines the need to revise guidance function, to let it change, from a tool to prevent school failure and unemployment, to a basic service to enhance citizens’ participation to school and job environments, moreover to follow the changes in the labour market and to define the VET system for social promotion.

After Council’s decision on July 15th 2005 on lines for employment policies in Member States, career guidance is shown as one of the measures to support access to training and education. In the same resolution “permanent assistance in looking for a job” is one of the services that must be given to unemployed users.

2006 is the year in which they sum up the first activities of survey and support to guidance policies in the Member States, so in this year CEDEFOP published a survey “Improving policies and guidance systems throughout life. Use of common European referring tools”: this document, based on EU settings, is aimed to spread a consciousness that could favour access to lifelong guidance as consequence of policies and programmes for guidance fit for national policies and programmes for education, training, employment and social integration.

Moreover, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2006, UE Presidency managed in Finland a conference on the situation of European policies for guidance, in which there was also the participation of official representatives of all the countries. Some of the focused priorities are the following<sup>10</sup>:

---

<sup>10</sup> from “Finnish EU Presidency Conference on Lifelong Guidance Policies and Systems: Building the Stepping Stones” Jyväskylä, 6-7 November 2006



- promoting national guidance fora within member-states. Such fora need to embrace all dimensions and sectors of guidance provision (including schools, VET, tertiary education, public employment services, community-based services, key ministries)
- building an European Lifelong Guidance Network, in which there are all the countries in which there are national fora, creating inner thematic workgroups (for instance young people at risk, migrants, etc.). This network should have a coordination unit placed in one of the member nations, linked with UE, CEDEFOP, ETF and with other organizations and supranational associations like IAEVG, FEDORA, et. involved in guidance policies.
- promoting every two years an European meeting on guidance.

In more recent times, in 2008, with the CE Resolution 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009 “Better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies” (2008/C 319/02), first of all guidance is defined as “continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills”. Based on this definition, member states are recommended to:

- “strengthen the role of lifelong guidance within national lifelong learning strategies in line with the Lisbon Strategy and with the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training,
- where appropriate, carry out reviews of guidance policies and practices at national level,
- make use of the following guiding principles (as detailed under "Priority Areas" in the Annex hereto), in accordance with national contexts and legislation and with a view to supporting the lifelong career transitions of citizens:
  1. encourage the lifelong acquisition of career management skills;



2. facilitate access by all citizens to guidance services;
  3. develop the quality assurance of guidance provision;
  4. encourage coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders,
- use the opportunities provided under the Lifelong Learning Programme and the European Structural Funds, in accordance with Member States' priorities.”

To reach these goals, member States, with the Commission, according to their own competencies, must “strengthen European cooperation on lifelong guidance provision, in particular through the ELGPN, with the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme, and in liaison with Cedefop; provide citizens and guidance stakeholders with reliable information resources which comprehensively cover Member States' education and training systems and guidance services, in particular via the Euroguidance network; foster the development of lifelong guidance in third countries in accordance with the four priority areas outlined in the Resolution, in particular through the activities of the European Training Foundation.”

Finally, as straight consequence of the decisions and recommendations mentioned above, in 2009, European Commission and member states ratified their cooperation through the document ET2020 Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training, that is the prosecution of Education and Training 2010 work programme launched in 2001.

The approach of this document recognizes that success of European economy depends largely on effectiveness of educational systems of all the member countries at all levels and, at the same time, on lifelong training activities, because global changes in labour market requires flexibility and adaptability with the possibility to give employees chances to train according to the needs of the labour market. Recognizing each member state as authority in managing educational systems, European policies as defined in ET2020 are aimed to support actions made by each State to face the most common challenges, as the increasing medium age, the lack/obsolescence of competencies of the workers, global competition.

This consciousness lead, at the end of November 2010 to writing and spreading of COM(2010) 682 Communication of the Commission to European Parliament, to the Council, European Economic and Social Committee and to the Committee of the Regions “An Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment”, that lists the following priorities for labour development in Europe:



- ❖ towards a new momentum for flexicurity: reducing segmentation and supporting transitions:
  - Priorities for reinforcing the four components of flexicurity
  - Priorities to enhance the implementation, monitoring and governance of flexicurity
- ❖ equipping people with the right skills for employment
  - Developing labour market intelligence and skills governance
  - Providing the right mix of skills
  - Matching people's skills and job opportunities, and capitalising on Europe's potential jobs
  - Enhancing geographical mobility throughout the EU
  - Reaping the potential of migration
- ❖ improving the quality of work and working conditions
  - A smarter EU legal framework for employment and health and safety at work
  - A strategic approach based on “soft” instruments
- ❖ supporting job creation
  - Strengthening the framework conditions for job creation
  - Promoting entrepreneurship, self-employment and innovation

In all these priorities, great importance is given to guidance as set of tools for training of people and for professional growth lasting all life long.

### 3. Career guidance in Italian law

In Italy, for what concerns guidance, and in particular guidance in the workplace, laws are quite recent. A first note on this profession is in the Legislative Decree of the 21st April 2000,

n. 181 *Dispositions to ease the joint of request and supply for work, acting art. 45, comma 1, lit. a) of law 17<sup>th</sup> May 1999, n. 144*: here, in the article 3 “General advice to services with competencies in avoiding long term unemployment”, is written that:

*“Regions define aims and operative advices for services with competencies in avoiding long term unemployment granting to people defined in art. 1, comma 2 to periodical interviews and other active policies giving the following services:*

*a) guidance interview within 3 months form the beginning of the unemployment period;*  
*b) suggestion to enter measures for working entry or training or professional refreshing to ease professional integration:*

*1 – for teenagers, young people and women looking for a job, within 4 months form the beginning of the unemployment period*

*2 – for other people at risk long term unemployment, within 6 months form the beginning of the unemployment period”*

This law surely gave a great support for the birth of the professional skill of guidance counsellor, but to find a normative acknowledgment we have to wait for the Decree of Minister for Work and Social Policies n. 166/2001 *Arrangement on official recognition of companies giving VET services* (Encl. 9), where, in the art. 10, there are the minimal standards for companies, both public and private, having ESF funds to realize vocational training activities, demanding to the enclose 2.3 in the same document for what concerns competencies and knowledge for coaches, counsellors and other people working in the guidance field. In this Declaration there are only 2 professional activities in guidance:

- Counsellor, whose activities are:
  - o to realize a deep analysis of supply and problems declared by the beneficiaries of guidance activities;
  - o to define the supply with each beneficiary of guidance activities;
  - o to come to a psychological arrangement with the user of an individual guidance path;
  - o to plan guidance interventions, both for individuals and for groups;
  - o to point out supply and main social, vital, training and professional needs of users;



- to introduce services and opportunities offered by the company;
  - to address, eventually, the user at other specialized or informative services on the territory;
  - to give information on training offer, structure of professionals and main careers existing at local and not local level;
  - to go in deep with users about resources, narrows and opportunities (inner and external);
  - to analyze training, professional and social experiences of the users to identify their capabilities, potentials, attitudes to enhance in different working fields;
  - to identify the possibilities to work and support choices and professional goal;
  - to help users in developing their professional and personal goals;
  - to identify local actors with strategic relevance for giving effective guidance;
  - to have cooperation and information with these actors;
- Tutor to employment, whose activities are:
- to look for sources, to collect and analyze market data and prospective on local development;
  - to organize and manage databanks to create service for entering the job market;
  - to plan, from a technical and organizational point of view activities, both for groups and individuals, in pre-training, training, information on job entering;
  - to support in the individual elaboration of a project to enter the job market (aims, needs, actions, timetables, resources, actors involved);
  - to plan and to organize internships and work experiences and to manage conventions and bureaucratic activities;
  - to support in gaining information and in selecting companies, writing curricula, letters and managing interviews;



- to collect, to archive and to refresh supply from companies;
- to link with training services developing training interventions aimed to entering the job market;
- to link with job centres to integrate guidance with other opportunities for training and working.

Although that, if dues are well identified, it's not clear which should be the training path that these professionals should have attended to have an official recognition of their professional skills. Moreover, in some institutions, like schools and Universities, in which there is the guidance office for students entering the school path, during their studies and outgoing the school, professionals involved in this activity are the same professors and teachers, through an official volunteer recruitment. This fact, on one hand increases the number of counsellors in guidance in Italy, but on the other hand increases also the difficulty in understanding this professional figure.

After the Decree of Minister for Work and Social Policies n. 166/2001, the agreement State-Regions in 2002 decided to define and make a survey about guidance operators at regional level, to arrive in the next years to build a system of description and acknowledgment of competencies at national level.

Basing on the Ministerial Declaration n. 166/2001, in 2003 ISFOL, Italian institution for vocational training, presented a document called "Looking for an hypothesis of professional profiles for a territorial system in guidance", in which there were 4 professional profiles in guidance:

- Operator in guidance, whose activities are:
  - to give information;
  - to make activities to enhance social abilities, like job research;
  - to have relations with users;
- Technician in guidance, whose activities are making guidance during compulsory education;



- Counsellor in guidance, a support in decisional processes, analyzing individual needs and resources;
- Analyst of guidance policies and services, whose activities are:
  - o to give technical assistance to institutions in defining guidance policies;
  - o to build action plans;
  - o to coordinate dedicated services;
  - o to plan interventions and analysis of needs;
  - o to evaluate interventions

This document is only a suggestion for the Regions and the operators, and it is not a normative disposition to follow, so the MD 166/2001 and the agreement of 2002 still remain the only laws to follow, even if in 2007 only 8 Regions and Provinces on 20 had established the criteria according to the agreement State-Regions in 2002, and after that there were many other documents from Italian Ministry about guidance.

On September 2004, in fact, The Ministry for Education, University and Research passed a Decree in which created a National Committee for Guidance, managed by the Ministry himself, with aims of study, analysis, planning and technical-scientific consulting. Moreover, on October 2004 the same Ministry, in particular the General Direction for Guidance and Training policies, spread a technical document called *Perspectives on the development of a national guidance system* (Encl. 10), in which are declared all the moments in life of people, from students to professionals, in which they can take advantage of guidance, and which there is a resume of the European indications on guidance.

Importance of guidance to overcome disequalities, especially gender disequalities in entering the job market, is reaffirmed in Legislative Decree n. 198/2006 *Code of equal opportunities among men and woman, according to art. 6 law 246/2005* at the art. 42, where guidance is among the positive activities to promote women entering the job market.

Finally in 2008, there is the Legislative Decree n. 22/2008 *Definition of guidance paths for professions and jobs, according to art. 2, comma 1 law 1/2007*, that defines the guidance paths to help students enter the job market as fruit of the cooperation among school and University, probably also with the help of other institutions and private companies (Encl. 11). The



guidance paths are defined as a mix among the enhancing of the students curricula and interventions of consulting and interviews that can be made by the teachers themselves. The organization and management of all those activities is cared by each school for itself.

Quindi, per riassumere i punti salienti della situazione normativa in Italia, è possibile So to resume the main points of the normative situation in Italy, first of all we can say that today there isn't a unique formalized career guidance system, and usually these activities are made in.

- temporary work agencies, always finalized in giving chances for unemployed in operative mansions;
- high school or during the University path, as counselling to look for a job in the field of studies. Some teachers are called to attend training paths in coaching organized by the Province (the Public Administration having in charge the educational system), follow the students in their study career but the career counselling is not due to all the students, it depends form their interest. Also at University, although often there are separated offices in which counselling services are given to students, the counselling needs are more about the study plan rather than the job opportunities;
- in some big companies there are the HR managers, but their counselling work is limited to people working in their own company or entering a job in their organization;
- in the Public Administration there are HR offices, but their work is aimed to guarantee the respect of Collective National Law for Workers, and not for giving career guidance services.

According to this situation, there aren't many training courses for coaches:

- the school offices in some Provinces organize courses for teachers of Public School;
- at Universities, in the Courses for Educational Sciences, there are teaching about guidance and sometimes also post-degree specialization courses;
- some private institutions organize high training courses in guidance and counselling, like CESTOR that manages the European School of High Education in Guidance;



- many private and public organizations manage Master Course in Human Resources Management, in which there are many lessons on counselling and guidance.

## 4. Career guidance in Slovenian law

Vocational guidance in Slovenia has a long tradition, which began in the 1950s with the establishment of Vocational Guidance Services in the Regional Employment Services. The momentum was maintained throughout the 1960s and 1970s, when counselling services were introduced in primary and secondary schools.

Nowadays the Schools and Employment Services are two of the major providers of counselling services. The responsibility for the financing of guidance lies with the Ministry for Education, Science and Sport, which caters for guidance in education, and the Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs, which caters for guidance in the employment sector. In some cases the two ministries share the responsibility.

There is no explicit coordinated policy for career guidance in Slovenia, and no cross-sectorial coordination body exists. Guidance in the Education Sector Counsellors in schools provide a broad range of counselling services, including personal, social and vocational guidance for students. However, they also work with others, including teachers, parents and school management. National Guidelines for School Counselling Services define the guidance programmes in primary and secondary schools in Slovenia. These programmes – called ‘Minimal Standards for Guidance in Primary Schools’ and ‘Minimal Standards for Guidance in Secondary Schools’ – include various information activities, lessons on career-related issues (such as career development, further education and employment possibilities), work with self-help guidance tools, psychological testing, individual career counselling and visits to employers. The national programme is largely implemented by school counsellors with the assistance of the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS). The latter strives to increase the information resources available for guidance, as well as providing guidance services through Centres for Information and Career Counselling, which offer the usual range of services and, increasingly, computerised self-directed guidance tools.

Career counsellors from the ESS have developed close and effective cooperative relationships with schools. The weakest element of career guidance in Slovene schools is career education,

which still has a marginal position in the curriculum. It is possible that the situation will improve in the vocational education and training sector, where reforms are taking place.

Universities and other institutions of higher education do not have specialised career counselling services or career counsellors. Some of these institutions carry out different guidance activities (including visits to potential employers) with the aim of establishing links between education institutions and organisations in the labour market. Because of the lack of professional counselling services, student fairs play an important role. Centres for adult educational guidance have been established within a number of adult education and training centres. Guidance in Labour Market Sector Vocational guidance has a long tradition in Slovenia's employment services. Prior to 1996, the main target groups were students in primary and secondary schools. By the mid-1990s, when unemployment had reached a peak of 15.3% (1993), the ESS had

shifted its focus to an older clientele, and a reform was launched in 1996 with the goal of developing new guidance services and methods suitable for adults, particularly those who were unemployed. The number of counselling sessions with unemployed people is currently higher than with student client groups, and more resources are allocated to the former than to the latter. Nevertheless, the ESS still retains responsibility for implementing aspects of the guidance programme in schools, and has contributed towards its development over the years. The relatively new experience of offering guidance services to the unemployed has highlighted the importance of two factors that determine the quality of service offered by the ESS. These are the level of professional skills of career counsellors and their ability to develop positive and collaborative relationships with client advisers. In attaining the latter goal, teamwork has proved to be a very effective mechanism. Employers generally do not tend to offer career guidance to their employees, though it must be said that in some cases, large and multinational enterprises do have well-developed services.

The following is an overview of strengths and weaknesses in the provision of career information and guidance services in Slovenia, with some pointers for the way forward.

### **Strengths:**

- ❖ The extent of counselling services offered in schools;
- ❖ The career counselling services available through the employment services;
- ❖ The level of existing professional development of guidance personnel;



- ❖ The trend for more partners to show an interest in guidance, accompanied by an increased willingness to participate in guidance-related activities and projects;
- ❖ The development of provision of educational guidance for adults;
- ❖ An emerging interest in career guidance among policy-makers.

### Weaknesses:

- ❖ The lack of quality, specialised training and education in the field of career guidance;
- ❖ The fact that career education still has a marginal position in the present school curriculum;
- ❖ The absence of a clear and coordinated guidance policy at national, regional and local levels;
- ❖ The lack of career counselling services at the higher education level.

In the past few years European policy has had a positive impact on the situation of career guidance in Slovenia. The country has, for instance, placed career guidance among its key priorities in national strategic documents (such as the National Employment Strategy and European Social Fund-related documents). Policy-makers are consequently showing an increasing interest in guidance, considering it to be an important active employment policy measure and a mechanism for improving the effectiveness of vocational training. This renewed interest represents both a challenge and an opportunity for guidance practitioners in Slovenia. A number of issues need to be addressed, however, if guidance services are to develop more successfully.

These include the following:

- ❖ Clear career guidance policies should be developed;
- ❖ Career guidance should be afforded a more central position in Slovene schools;
- ❖ Career guidance as a profession should be more proactive in defining its role in the present and future situation in the labour market, and in developing its profession to meet present and future needs;



- ❖ Quality education and training programmes for career counsellors should be developed to help counsellors to acquire the competences they need in order to cope with demanding tasks<sup>11</sup>.

The laws on career orientation or guidance are outdated and are still referring to guidance as to vocational guidance. Some of the rare laws that tackle guidance are:

- ❖ **The Employment and Insurance Against Unemployment Act** claims the ESS is the one responsible for career orientation and that the unemployed should have the costs of career orientation, guidance and counselling covered.
- ❖ **The Organization and Financing of Education Act** says that school guidance service and ESS should be connected when performing career counselling and guidance. One of the goals of this act is also gaining the possibility for further educational and professional path with the emphasis on qualifications for LLL.
- ❖ **The Vocational Education Act** mentions that social partners and ministries should cooperate with schools when dealing with guidance and planning the curriculum.

## 5. Beneficiaries of career guidance activities

Career guidance service, in theory, can be given to all active population, that is to all those that, from a statistical point of view, can work, and to all the students, at all educative levels. So it's covered a really wide range of people, with different stories and needs, for whom is important to adopt different guidance strategies and tools.

Although this, it's necessary to think to guidance not only as giving information focused on looking for a job – any kind of job; “new vision, better known as career guidance [...], overcoming old classifications, defines guidance aimed to career because it faces everytime working life and has as aim to support individuals in taking decisions during transition periods in work”<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> Source: [review of career guidance policies in 11 acceding and candidate countries synthesis report july 2003](#)

<sup>12</sup> Sangiorgi G., (2000) *ORIENTARE. Manuale per career counselling*, Isedi.

Traditionally, the beneficiaries of guidance are young students entering the labor market or unemployed who are turning to specialists, generally in public institutions, such as employment centers, dedicated to job search. However, especially in recent years, the rapidly changing international business led to the limelight and the attention of practitioners, as well as the institutions, the presence of an increasing number of adults facing a period of transition. The term transition is used to indicate the process of changing socio-psychological subject of his inner world, in the transition from one condition (training or job) to another. During adult life there may be various types of transition between one type of work and another type of work experience, between training and employment, including work experience and training, job loss and the transition from work to retirement; introduction into a new organizational (formative or productive)<sup>13</sup>.

The beneficiaries of the activities of careers guidance may be many more young students and unemployed, so we must also add the following categories:

- ❖ people entering the labor market at all levels, especially those who intend to grow in their work (both inside and outside the company) and those who, due to obsolescence of their skills / knowledge, appear to be at risk out of the market;
- ❖ people with low educational qualifications, including in this case even those who have special needs, such as, for example, people with disabilities, who, needing customized training programs have not been able to complete their studies;
- ❖ immigrants, who need to certify their skills acquired on the basis of job availability in the host country;
- ❖ women, particularly those in possession of qualifications or weak with little work experience or returning from maternity leave;
- ❖ older people compared to a first entry into the labor market, they see their skills inadequate to meet the demands of the labor market.

As already told, particular attention is devoted to all those who face particular moments of transition from one condition to another, namely:

- ❖ from middle school to high school,

---

<sup>13</sup> Pombeni M. L., D'Angelo M. G., (1994). *L'orientamento di gruppo*, NIS La Nuova Italia Scientifica Roma.



- ❖ from school to work,
- ❖ from high school to university,
- ❖ from being unemployed to being employed,
- ❖ from one job to another or from one level to another,
- ❖ from one location to another within the same organization,
- ❖ from a period of escape from the labor market to reintegrate the same role.

These transition periods are extremely delicate, as well as natural psychological difficulties in facing new situations, especially in times of economic crisis like the actual one, these are precisely the times when the person discovers considerable difficulties in formulating and implementing a career plan because of certain elements or blocks, in principle, by lack of knowledge of self, a tendency to conform, by a dependence, difficulties to be realistic, to set themselves objectives, identify and understand the actual problems, set priorities and the inability to establish positive alternatives. As for adults, in particular, situations of transition may be intentional, desired, wanted and put in place, but we must not forget those imposed by external factors (changes in employment, business organization, in personal affairs) .

It is desirable that the adult is able to self-navigate through the skills acquired in his life, meaning his initial training, work experience and other non-formal and informal learning contexts, but perhaps this assumption is realistic only for some adults with higher levels of education and training, while the practice shows that, in general, whether the adult is - must be - a potential user of the orientation activities. This happens for several reasons:

- ❖ to decide how to act with respect to a professional transition - that is, take a decision, to design a project and assess its viability - everyone needs information on its aims, but most reliable and up-
- ❖ cognitive processes, representations, behavioral styles, coping styles (coping strategies and ways of problem situations, stressors) evolve over a lifetime by making the learning orientation at a young age is not immediately recognizable or non-transferable
- ❖ levels of education or qualifications do not always meet the requirements of guidance,



- ❖ previous negative experiences or professional failure can create motivation or misrepresentations of himself as a person unable to begin a process of learning or to take different paths professional
- ❖ experience of transition, especially if taxes are not “painless” from the psychological point of view, as they can affect the balance of affection, esteem, develop a sense of personal identity threat.

What is important, therefore, as indicated by the recommendations of the European Commission, is to encourage the development of a “flexible” attitude in which, although not by choice, probably one or more changes, in practice, will be faced, and therefore it requires the use of resources and means to deal with these transitions. It is also important to stress that any process of change, as a source of anxiety, if properly managed and controlled, can result in benefits and advantages, increasing the quality of life and the feeling of satisfaction<sup>14</sup>.

In this case it is clear that the beneficiary of guidance look for a consultancy that can not be focused only on job search, as this is an important aspect, but on the preliminary definition of professional staff, the strengths and weakness of education, employment alternatives, and then the career paths that fit best not only desires, but also characteristics and constraints that each individual has. Based on these considerations, an effective intervention in career guidance can not be separated from the assessment of knowledge and skills and whether the address of the recipient to training proposals that enhance and complement their skills.

## 6. Career guidance provider

Guidance operators in Italy, as told before, can be of many kinds:

- private workers, counselors in guidance operating in private companies;
- public job centres;
- temporary agencies;

---

14 Solimeno A. - Porcelli R. - Bosca M.A., (2009) “L’orientamento tra variabili individuali e di contesto”, in *SPO Campania i primi due anni di attività*, Grimaldi A. - Girardi F. (a cura di), Napoli, Tullio Pironti Editore.



- operators in schools and Universities.

For what concerns the first category, private companies are maybe the most difficult to study: in fact, although there are some legal recognition systems, this kind of law does not forbid to companies not in the lists to operate in guidance. These lists should guarantee the adhesion to a minimum standard system in guidance, but often big consulting companies operating in guidance and HR management are not interested in this kind of recognition, because they have a strong brand and a big portfolio of clients. In the recognition lists, that are different in each Region in Italy, there are many companies, often operating in all the fields of guidance and training, especially vocational training, and there are also some schools, because to be legally recognized by one Region means most of all to have access to some funds for training and guidance.

Public job centres in Italy are managed by the Province. The work level in these institutions is not the same everywhere: it depends from the environment in which they are, and from the problems the operators have to face. During the research among the Job Centres in Campania Region, it was recognized that often small Job Centres are more enterprising than the ones in big cities, maybe because, having a smaller number of users, can participate to more calls for grants or can focus their attention to projects for new targets. In fact, during the interviews, many operators told that targets are changing: there is always a big number of young people looking for the first job, but also the number of migrants is increasing, that is good because it means that this target is going to exit the dramatic conditions of working under the table. Moreover, Job Centres were born with the aim to inform people looking for a job, so career guidance in these centres, as meant by the literature, is still on a start-up phase.

Temporary agencies can give career guidance services, but often only related to the working positions they have open, and not developing a career path that could follow all the professional life of individuals.

As told before, also at schools and Universities there are some guidance services, but also in this case, the autonomy given by law to these institutions means that the quality level is not the same everywhere: there are some schools, often professional and technical schools, and Universities with a dedicated office, while in others there is only the possibility to have an appointment with the teacher that is in charge of this service to have more information on the educational profile. Some Universities have Career Offices in cooperation with other education agencies or guidance companies, to guarantee an high level of service. Unluckily



there is also a lack of consciousness among the users on how useful this service can be: students look for information on exams and maybe on internships, but they don't seem very interested in building up a profile, make skill audit or assessment tests to understand their professional profile.

Las note must be done on the professional profile of counselors in guidance: actually in Italy there is not a formalized professional profile for guidance counselors, a register, so there is a double difficulty:

- on one hand there is the necessity to settle the minimum professional profile to be called "guidance counselor" (see above the chapter on Italian law);
- on the other hand there is the necessity to recognize the competencies gained by guidance counselors during their work, due to their will to grow up in their profession, reading, studying, following the guidance system evolution, "creating" tools and schedules to do their work at best.

Here it is a shedule about guidance services providing

<b>where guidance services are provided</b>	<b>Kinds of services offered</b>	<b>Formal regulations/ Administrative control</b>	<b>Educational background</b>
<i>Educational and vocational guidance in upper secondary education</i>	Individual counselling and information prior to the next step of education.	School Law	sometime courses managed by local authority
<i>Guidance at universities and university colleges:</i> 1. Central level 2. Departmental level 3. Career centres	1. Individual counselling about educational choices 2. Advise in the special field of study 3. Career choices, applications, job vacancies	Regulation of each university; students <b>can</b> have access to study counselling /The National Agency for Higher Education	
<i>Advanced Vocational Education</i>	Counselling on educational choices	No formal regulation	Varying, sometimes teachers, sometimes counsellors
<i>Local information centres</i>	Self-service and individual counselling, information	Municipality authorities	Varying

<b>where guidance services are provided</b>	<b>Kinds of services offered</b>	<b>Formal regulations/ Administrative control</b>	<b>Educational background</b>
<i>Employment Offices</i>	Self-service individual counselling mainly for those in most need.	No regulations regarding guidance activities	In-service training, sometimes psychologists.

In Slovenia, situation is quite different. There are a number of organisations offering advice and guidance to adults in Slovenia, open to both employed and unemployed. Employed individuals with a low education level and employed in middle and small companies in Slovenia have less access to guidance than those in larger companies. The situation is, however, slowly changing, due to participation in international projects promoting life long learning. The national projects are often implemented or monitored by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE). Actually organizations providing career guidance services are mainly consulting societies and guidance and job centres managed by NGO (43%), private companies working in different fields/entrepreneurs (36%) and schools (21%)

Public and private organisations providing advice and guidance to adults in region or country:

- ❖ **Employment services** (12 regional offices) and in the National Resource Centers for Vocational Guidance. Provides free guidance and career counselling also to those in employment, but more than 80% receiving counselling are unemployed.
- ❖ **14 regional adult education guidance centres** Offer free information and guidance to support education and learning of all adults in the local environment. 45% of clients are employed
- ❖ **Human resource departments or departments for education provide guidance in large companies** This applies only to very large, successful companies.
- ❖ In **private employment agencies** Offer counselling for development of human resources and education. They provide their service to employed persons (individually or through human resource departments in the companies). Those with lower education do not use these opportunities



- ❖ The **regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia** (one in each of the 12 Slovenian statistical regions) Opportunities for information and guidance related to education to employed for the programmes developed by the chambers themselves.
- ❖ **Regional Chambers of Craft** (62 in Slovenia). Opportunities for information and guidance related to education to employed for the programmes developed by the chambers themselves. Regional Chambers often collaborate with adult education guidance centres.

Moreover, here there are also the institutions devoted to young people guidance:

- ❖ **Primary schools, secondary schools, high schools** all have guidance counsellors. The accessibility of guidance in schools is quite lower than one would expect. The reason lays in plenty of other tasks that guidance counsellors have to perform on every day basis. In secondary schools and high schools guidance counsellors have even less time due to higher number of students than in primary schools.
- ❖ **University** students still have some problems with access to guidance counselling. The most used approaches are career fairs, only few universities enable their students to use guidance counselling services through career centres. But even here we have to keep in mind that there is lack of guidance counsellors in comparison to big number of students.
- ❖ **Employment service of Slovenia** 12 regional offices and in the National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance. Provides free guidance and career counselling also to pupils and high school students and other youth.
- ❖ **HRM private providers and employment agencies** offer guidance counselling to adults and youth, usually in exchange for a fee.

## 7. Providers of training interventions for workers

In Italy institutions offering training courses for workers, and to vocational training courses and continuing education, belong to different categories:



- ❖ High Schools, in particular the technical colleges or vocational schools,
- ❖ private institutions accredited to its region or at ISFOL for continuing education,
- ❖ private entities not accredited in any list,
- ❖ non-profit entities that are issued or national organizations and the employees, the self-employed, entrepreneurs, the cooperative movement, or association with a legal mandate training and social
- ❖ University,
- ❖ third sector,
- ❖ the companies themselves, where they have expertise and internal dimensions such that they can organize, manage and deliver training courses for their employees.

Training, designed as a “system of training interventions aimed at the dissemination of theoretical knowledge and practical skills required to perform professional roles and turned to the first designation, qualification, retraining, specialization, upgrading and improvement of workers” was promoted and adopted in its salient features in the Framework Law 845/78, completed the work for the Pact of 1996, signed by the Government and social partners. These documents outline a new institutional framework which focuses on an integrated training system that can respond to requests from one side of the labor market and of those who choose to undertake a new training course, even if already in possession of qualifications or if you have already entered the labor market.

In 1998, the Social Pact for Development and Employment, signed between the government and social partners, has introduced, among other innovations, the development of new channel for education and technical vocational training integrated (better known as IFTS) and the strengthening of continuing education.

With regard to the provision of training in Italy, this often seems overly focused on the acquisition of soft skills and it’s often targeted as “generalist”, which compels those who need a greater specialization to “travel” all along Italian regions searching for training suited to their needs. In addition to issues related to the geographical distribution of the training, it also raises



the issue of service tools that can accompany and supplement what is offered to businesses and workers, not least, therefore, the presence of a support plan for workers who follow them during training and direct their career choices. This situation has created a strong bias towards national providers of supply, that can provide more comprehensive support to clients at the expense of local, smaller and fragmented training companies. Only in a few large urban centers there are a few examples of excellence, as it can detect the integration between training centers and university centers and research (especially in Bari and Naples)<sup>15</sup>.

Another long-debated issue is that of funds companies can access to finance training for employees. In large part, in fact, we believe that continuing education should be free for those who participate, in order to avoid gaps.

Training for those who have already entered the world of work can benefit from the following funding streams:

- ❖ financing under EU funding, particularly ESF,
- ❖ national resources, largely represented in Italy by Law 263/93 and subsequent decrees,
- ❖ regional funds,
- ❖ municipal funds,
- ❖ provincial funds,
- ❖ joint funds,
- ❖ equity company, for both the private and public companies.

For a long time in Italy the law 236/93 has represented, along with measures aimed at addressing the ESF, the main source of funding for continuous training, representing the most important intervention for the construction of the main lines of the national system of Continuous Education. With the measures introduced by this law, the region had access to tools for continuous training on individual demand (eg vouchers) and is always in this area that was born the so-called training plan (local, sectoral, company or individual) Located at the base of the new joint funds for continuous training. The philosophy behind the implementation

---

<sup>15</sup> Fonte: Rapporto al Parlamento 2008 del Ministero per il Lavoro e le Politiche Sociali sulla Formazione Continua



of this law was to encourage integration with similar actions financed by the ESF and enhance the lines of public support for continuous education, taking into account the launch of Interprofessional Funds.

With regard to the sums paid by provinces and municipalities, these are closely related to the activities carried out by institutions directly managed by these authorities, that are the schools (middle and high schools, which may be present figures about the orientation of learners) and the employment centers. In particular the latter, however, they also have the ability to access EU funds, through participation in calls related to the typical activities that these centers play.

Currently, in Italy, the regions, especially those in the Convergence Objective, provide funds earmarked for orientation using the resources of the POR. In detail, the Campania Region, by Resolution No. 256, February 13, 2009 “*Measures to combat the economic crisis, employment in the Campania Region: extra efforts to national programming crisi*” and the Resolution No 397, March 6, 2009 “*Integration and implementation of the DGR No. 256/09: Additional elements to the full utilization and allocation of additional resources*” has determined the activation of operations, amounting to 123 million euro in support of businesses and individual workers by dividing the resources among activities training for workers laid off, workers on the move; unemployed workers without protection, in a state of unemployment arising from termination of contracts atypical co.co.pro, temporary work and other forms of contract. As far as specific actions for guidance, the Region has committed to funding initiatives for guidance / training to be conducted in collaboration with the centers for use, intended primarily for persons in layoffs (CIGS - extraordinary redundancy fund and CIGO- ordinary income assistance) and unemployed persons is also due to the impact of the economic crisis whose condition has also led to the cessation of non-standard contracts for a maximum of 400 hours of posting to rely entirely on funds POR ESF. Among the instruments of guidance/training that the regions are experiencing, there are also new forms of apprenticeship. The aim of this action is to achieve specific training in the company allowing the acquisition of basic skills, cross-professional and technical, identified in close correlation with the goals expressed by the professionalization of the labor market and the companies themselves, taking into account the knowledge and skills the learner.

As for funds paid directly by the European Union, these are contained in the Lifelong Learning Programme and its subprogrammes, including Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig as regards the activities aimed at adults and employed adults, and are accessible after participation in the notice.



Finally, a way still not used to access financing for orientation and training of employees in any company is to participate in the notices of joint funds for the national service training. These associations are promoted by representatives of social partners through specific interconfederal agreements concluded by unions of employers and workers are most representative at the national level. There may also be established and funds for each productive sector, from agriculture to crafts industry, and within the appropriate sections can be made for the training of managers. The rationale behind the establishment of joint funds is the implementation of this provision of the law in the Law 388 of 2000, which aims to allow companies to allocate the share of 0.30% of contributions paid to INPS (the so-called “contribution required for involuntary unemployment”) to the training of their employees. Employers can ask it to transfer to INPS contribution to one of joint funds of competence, which will finance training activities for employees of member companies.

Funds actually authorized are:

- ❖ Fondo Artigianato Formazione – Fund for training in Arts and Crafts companies
- ❖ Fon.Coop – Fund for training in cooperative
- ❖ Fondimpresa – Fund for continuous learning
- ❖ Fondo Dirigenti PMI – Fund for VET of managers in small and medium firms
- ❖ Fondo Formazione PMI – Fund for training of managers in SMEs
- ❖ FONDIR. – Fund for continuous training of managers of tertiary field
- ❖ FOR.TE. – Fund for continuous training of tertiary field
- ❖ Fondirigenti – Fondirigenti Giuseppe Taliercio (Foundation for manager training in industrial enterprises)
- ❖ FON.TER. – Fund for the training of employees in enterprises of the tertiary sector and tourism sectors of distribution services
- ❖ Fondoprofessioni – Fund for Continuous Education in the Professional Studies
- ❖ Fond.E.R. - Fund for Continuous Education in religious companies



- ❖ Fon.Ar.Com. - Fund for continuing education in the service areas, crafts and small and medium-sized enterprises
- ❖ For.Aagri. - Fund industry for continuing vocational training in agriculture
- ❖ Fondazienda - Fund for the training of executives and employees of sub-trade-tourism services, crafts and small and medium enterprises
- ❖ Fondo Banche Assicurazioni - Fund for training in the fields of banking and insurance
- ❖ Formazienda - Fund for continuous education in the sector of trade, tourism, services, professions and small and medium-sized enterprises
- ❖ Fonditalia – Fund for continuous education in the economic sectors of industry and small and medium-sized enterprises
- ❖ Fondo Formazione Servizi Pubblici - Fund for continuous education in public services.

In Slovenia, the ESS - Economic and Social Council of Slovenia authorizes several training programs for persons placed in employment, in particular non-formal education, such as language courses or PC use, and some vocational training courses, but the entrepreneurs themselves have to respond to notices issued. Other training needs are left to the initiative of individual companies able to get some funding for the provision of specific training courses for their employees, generally related to the needs of a particular job position.

## 8. Providers of training interventions on guidance

Field analysis carried out in Italy and Slovenia found that, even if already entered into the world of work, with considerable training, formal or informal behind, guidance counselors, however, represent the training needs related largely to the acquisition of new skills and knowledge and customize what they do every day than new sources of customers.

The 36.84% of the interviewed companies expresses training needs on guidance methods, the 15.79% on HR management, only the 5.25% on specific productive fields and cultural mediation; interesting is the fact that the 36.84% of companies expresses no training needs.



Operators in schools don't declare any training need, while people working in job centres cares about training on specific productive fields, on cultural mediation and on guidance methods, to give a better service. Operators from consulting societies and training centres would like to have more training on HR management and guidance methods, according, maybe, to all the field of activities they can cover. Operators from other companies are going to focus their further training only on HR management.

This prompts the question as to what are the entities in which these professionals can obtain an education dedicated and aligned to their needs. In large part, the executive education on the issues of orientation in Italy was held by the following agencies:

- ❖ University, through post-graduate courses, and through specific degrees, such as in Education, in which the curriculum there are tests that belong to the area of guidance;
- ❖ administrator, that individual provinces in organizing courses for teachers who are called to play the role of coach or guidance for students of your school;
- ❖ private institutions of higher education, through the organization and delivery of courses mainly focused on general issues of HR management;
- ❖ private companies belonging to associations for guidance and counseling through the organization of short courses, seminars and workshops guidance;
- ❖ individual professionals.

In the latter case, please note that currently in Italy there is no real roster of counselors and professionals, while there is a system of regional accreditation and national structures which provide guidance services.

The resulting framework is a general lack of specific training opportunities for counselors and especially of uncertainty over what are the criteria for choosing a training course in the area that actual transfer of knowledge and skills.

Regarding the situation in Slovenia, is to be specified in the first instance that there is a strong need of educational programs that give participants the opportunity to access to appropriate training on orientation and guidance counseling. All guidance counselors, in fact, manage to obtain skills in the workplace, through practice. There is great need for specialized training, as it is necessary to have specialist skills in guidance and counseling. Counselors in schools, for example, perform many other tasks, as well as the careers guidance (administrative roles, organizational, etc.). In practice there is no training for counselors in Slovenia. Only the ESS



internal training for its operators which provide provide guidance to their customers. There are some private consultants carrying out workshops for counselors, including the same Kadis, but not all organizations or schools participating, because they are not willing to pay to receive specialist training.

## 9. Management of career guidance lessons

Starting a complex system of educational policies also means developing those professional competences which are the focus of counselling in Italian and European political regulations, the target of the action carried out by social parties, operators and the subject of experts' discussions about the labour market, employability of people, education and professional training.

The analysis of personal resources and professional projects, which are addressed especially to workers, concerns those activities that mainly concentrate on reconstruction and *evaluation of personal and technical-professional competences linked to the evolution of the working experience* (career development, horizontal and upright professional mobility, etc.). The need to choose, based on the professional expertise one has matured in time and on personal potential - in prospect (wish or opportunity) to access *new choices or new projects* – can be individually expressed by the worker, but also by the production bodies. Career guidance actions, *which have aims other than those of selection*, are actually entering step by step the field of human resources management as a *strategy that supports workers*, for example, in the process of a company reorganization.

The matter, focused on the guidance and on those who develop training and guidance activities, concerns not only the *development*, but also the *detection* and the *assessment* of such competences, in teaching /learning processes. The point *competences* can comprehend different basic themes, that are strongly interrelated:

- ❖ in the world of work they represent the strategic key-resource for the competitiveness of companies and organizations;
- ❖ for the System of Education and Professional Training they constitute the primary formative objectives, and they guide the teaching/learning process;



- ❖ for the individual they are a factor of adaptability, employability, professional development and individual heritage, to be recognized, improved and certified.

The basic theme of competences has to be faced not only in terms of individuation and evaluation, but also and especially from a promotion and development point of view. This involves the differentiation of the criteria and instruments of assessment according to the educational, training and work context.

In the perspective of a continuous lifelong learning<sup>16</sup> the need of establishing guidance activities which promotes different competences is stronger, in order to let a person be able to adapt to changes and challenges of globalization in a flexible way.

*‘Investing on training and career guidance is in this moment one of the strategic factors in the Country’s development process and a support mean to renew the national and local Education system and Work policies. Guidance is also more and more important as far as social policies are concerned, which aim to the individual’s well-being and to his professional development; It is acquiring a global meaning, that crosses all different phases in an individual’s life’.* (Ministry of Labour and social Policies, 2008)

Guidance is originally a service aimed to help and support the passage from education to the world of work. It seems to be clear that in our current society, that is so complex and always ready to change, to work flexibility and to continuous training, such activity does not address only to young people at the end of their education, but also, and above all, to adults, both in the different stages of a career and in the professional conversions from a sector into another one. Guidance nowadays represents a ‘*support mean* which accompanies the citizen all life-long’.

Anyway, in spite of all changes in progress and the new needs of the labour market, Italy has not produced a national guidance model yet, nor updated regulations about this theme or a standardized definition of procedures and necessary professionalisms. In our Country the Bodies we refer to for Training and Guidance are the Ministry of Labour and the *Isfol*, the Institute for the Development of Professional Training of Workers.

---

<sup>16</sup> Lisbon Resolution 2000: its aim is making the European Community more and more competitive and innovative within economy and labour market



From a mere speculative point of view, many different theoretical-cultural arguments about guidance policies have followed one another over the years, integrated and focused on the theme, any of them proposing its own methods to build valid strategies to use in guidance practice and in *career guidance*. In the operating context, even if one moves from the guidelines created starting from the more important and appreciated studies on this theme, the choice of the methodology and instruments to employ will have to be suggested, of course, by the specific situation one operates in and above all it will have to be shared by the client and/or the Body/Organization that asks for the guidance intervention.

Among the studies on Guidance we suggest those which mostly have inspired the current debate, that is to say: **(1) Parsons<sup>17</sup>'s approach on features** (individual characteristics) **and factors** (the characteristics required for a good working performance) that implies the procedure aimed to the combination of individuals and professions and, in particular, focused on problem solving, with great attention to the pair diagnosis-assessment; the guidance counsellor is an expert responsible for the analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis and *follow up*; **(2) Carl Rogers<sup>18</sup>'s studies** underline the importance of the relationship – based on trust and cooperation – which arises between counselor and client; **(3) finally, the theory of the career development stages by Donald Super** that underlines the importance, in professional choices, of a series of factors such as subjective and emotional components: people are encouraged to define themselves and their life environment and to base themselves on the subjective sources of their knowledge. According to all this, the constructivist approach dulls the problem solving and its emphasis on assessment, and tends to give a higher importance to the client's relationship and life experience: the counsellor's position so passes from that of expert to that of active listener and the aim of the guidance process especially becomes that of restarting the client, promoting his *empowerment* and putting him into the condition of facing transitions and managing his own career. From a theoretical point of view, the clear passage in this model is that from scores assignment to the telling of his own story ('*from scores to stories*').

From this brief excursus given one sees the general inclination towards the definition of a conceptual model where the individual is the *protagonist* of the process and his *personal and*

---

<sup>17</sup> Parsons F., *Choosing a vocation*, Houghton Mifflin, 1909

<sup>18</sup> Rogers C., *Client-centered-Therapy*, 1944

*social development* represents the main purpose of guidance activities intended as a ‘*device that gives sense to the evolution of the person’s professional story*’, especially in a society that evolves quickly as the contemporary one, where professional careers are less linear and more and more characterized by continuous changes of direction and interruptions that demand the individual’s capacity to manage and guide the changes, and so they require the acquiring of strategies and instruments to build or reorganize a satisfying professional project in progress, which could give *continuity and sense* in the change.

The person is therefore called to mature specific competences in *different phases of his/her life* (lifelong guidance), with the contribution of *different resources* (more reference contexts within the guidance system) and through *different actions* (diversification of the professional practice with relation to the target needs). Having these *competences* aids the process of *choosing* and facilitates the development of a *planning*, in the stages of educational and working *transition*.

On the basis of what said above, one draws the conclusions that, on an operating level, according to the kind of counselling required (focused on *training*, on *entering professional life*, on the *working activity* or on the *end of the work experience*) different specific *actions* can be put into practice.

Career guidance, then, in the course of the working experience, can have different meanings, depending on whether it is based on a *subjective motivation* (career development, interest in changing work, etc.) or an influence of *objective conditions* (lost of work, professional mobility, etc.); these basic factors qualify in different way the guidance needs of the adult worker: in the first case one has to think of an *occupied worker* mainly in terms of guidance needs related to requirements of:

- a) promotion of the *working life quality*;
- b) evolution of a *personal professional project*;
- c) change of the *organizational context*;
- d) *qualification at work*.

In the second case, one refers to the *unemployed worker* whose main guidance needs concern the fact of:

- a) *facing* the subjective experience of *professional deprivation*;



- b) *planning strategies to re-enter the labour market;*
- c) *increasing his/her own condition of employability (for example, through training).*

In both cases the *career guidance* lessons aim to support a person to explore his/her aptitudes, skills and competences useful to recognize and develop his/her personal and professional potential and to approach the labour world with higher awareness.

Usually, during the first lesson, that takes about 1 hour, one establishes the further steps of the career guidance counselling, that comprehends maximum 4 more lessons.

The techniques used by the counsellor during the career guidance are many and they are employed both individually and integrated, according to the context one operates into. The more diffused techniques are:

- » *free account of his/her own education and professional career,*
- » *self-assessment questionnaires concerning his/her own aptitudes, skills, values and ambitions,*
- » *exercises that help tracing back the most important stages of his/her own life,*
- » *exercises on the future projections,*
- » *drawing of his/her own mind map or that of the field of forces that can help or obstruct a desired change.*

The different techniques can be used in individual counselling or in group counselling and within the competence assessment or the guidance *counselling*. Giving space to emotionality does not belittle the assessment practises; on the contrary, studies have highlighted that it is just in the comparison between the person's subjectivity and the counsellor's principle of rationality that one defines a significant planning career.

So assessment nowadays represents only one of the guidance instruments, and in this area of interest, it is carried out through the interview and the combined examination of the client's life experiences rather than with instruments considered, in some cases, too strict, as tests and aptitude tests.

From a pragmatic point of view, thus, career guidance service seems to be a complex and articulated way composed of a series of meetings and activities which go from the client's competence assessment to the *career coaching*, whose management must be assigned to skilled professionals. Afterwards we will analyse the main nuclei of career guidance, that is to say: *competence assessment, assessment techniques, potential evaluation, counselling interview, career coaching*.

## **a. Competence assessment**

Competence assessment is an activity where competences are gathered, that is to say all those personal characteristics- knowledge, skills, ambitions, etc.- from which a good working performance depends.

According to a recent definition by *Isfol* the competence assessment is an '*instrument that allows adults, employed people or people searching for a work, to take stock of their professional competence: to know, to know how to learn, to know how to be, to do, to act and to be willing to act. The main purpose of competence assessment consists in accompanying and supporting a person to rebuild and improve his/her own personal history and to evaluate his/her competences and personal resources, in order to work out a professional development project and its related plan of action.*'

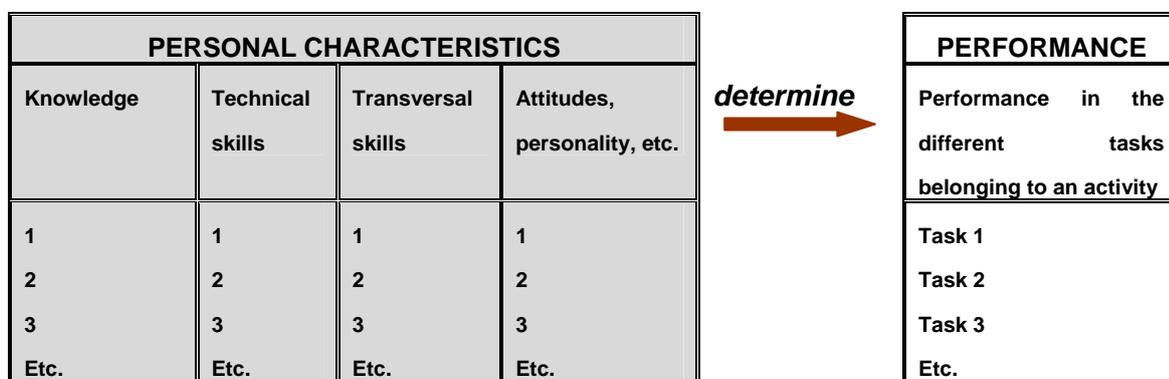
Therefore, it is necessary to be very clear on what follows:

- ⇒ **what** competences are and how they are defined;
- ⇒ **where**, in which contexts it is useful to identify and estimate competences;
- ⇒ **how**, through which instruments and systems, competences are identified.

The competences definition (though there are different approaches on the matter and many different nuances about the sense of the term) is *the set of theoretical and practical knowledge, of skills and capacities that enable an individual to have a good guidance in a specific field of action. The competence is then a knowledge in action: inside it the operational component of knowledge arises, that is to say the presence of a constant guidance to join knowing and*

knowing how to do it, *also in very complicated situations, which need complex patterns of thinking and action.* (Fonte: Isfol).

Therefore the term ‘competence’ indicates what a person can do, independently from how he/she learnt to do it and ‘competent’ is ‘*who is able to carry out a specific task or profession in a good way*’. When examining someone *while at work*, one evaluates how some of his/her personal characteristics (knowledge, technical and transversal skills, attitudes, personality etc.) determine and influence his/her working performance.



In this table, borrowed by the American model of definition for competences (McClelland), factors (that is to say competences) identified are grouped in three macro categories:

1. **knowledge**, that is to say the technical knowledge (i.e. being able to make a welding) and general knowledge (i.e. knowing a work agreement);
2. **technical skills** (i.e. knowing all procedures to make a welding) **or transversal skills** (communication skills, interpersonal skills, etc.);
3. **other personal characteristics** (i.e. character traits, aptitudes and interests, etc.).

Isfol’s model for competences, created in 1998, identifies:

- **Basic Competences:** general knowledge and fundamental technical skills for the employability and the right to citizenship that all citizens should have, such as, for example, speaking English, using the computer, being able to search for a job, knowing how to analyse the functioning of a company and knowing about labour law and industrial law;



- **Transversal Competences:** transversal skills, which means not linked to a specific activity or position and that therefore can be applied to different contexts and working and/or life sectors;
- **Professional Competences:** the set of knowledge and skills connected to the effective practice of some specific professional activities in the different compartments/sectors; they are knowledge and specific operational techniques of a certain professional activity that the individual must guard to be able to ‘act with competence’.

Within the competence assessment it is useful to distinguish between *identification* and *assessment* of competences: in the first case one identifies *which* competences people have got, in the second case one measures the *level* of such competences.

While during the selection and training the competence assessment must usually be detailed and precise, as it has an ‘external’ functionality, and because of this it takes the characters of verification, during the career guidance the competence assessment, that especially has an ‘internal’ importance (because it is made to allow the person to improve the awareness of his/her own competences to reach professional objectives), will take the characters of an identification and it will use instruments such as the examination of the educational and professional career and self-evaluation questionnaires.

In this context it is useful, during all the career guidance, that the counsellor personally helps the person to take note of the competences identified little by little through specific forms, and in the end, to gather and order them in a portfolio. This practice of recording the competences and that of the portfolio meet some important aims:

- » *To sensitize the person of the need of a continuous attention and maintenance of his/her own employability,*
- » *To improve his/her self-esteem,*
- » *To make a possible identification and/or certification of competences easier.*

The easiest way to identify many **knowledge and technical skills** is the examination of the educational and professional career; as for the **transversal skills** goes, on the contrary, one uses the client’s description of work or life episodes.



In the activity of assessment competences are measured in the most objective way possible and, in order to do that, one uses the help of different integrated tools: not only ‘objective’ techniques, such as personality tests or verification of knowledge, but also ‘subjective’ practices such as interviews to the person and his/her colleagues or the observation of the person during his/her job.

⇒ Competences intended as **working tasks** that the person is able to carry out according to a pre-established level, can be verified with a series of methods often used in an integrated way, like:

1. **observation of person on his/her work site;**
2. **simulation of tasks and working situations;**
3. **discussion about case studies;**
4. **colleagues and supervisors’ evidence;**
5. **evaluation of documents produced when working;**
6. **analysis of work products, for example some organised in a portfolio;**
7. **examination of the former educational and professional career.**

⇒ Competences intended as **personal characteristics** are, on the contrary, checked through other different systems, according to their nature. **Technical skills** can be detected with the above-indicated systems. **Technical knowledge** can be checked through interviews, written tests, the exam of the work products. **Transversal skills** and **other personal characteristics** can be checked through tests, self-evaluation tests, interviews.

Once checked, competences can be acknowledged or certified: we speak about acknowledgement when one obtains a credit for the extra-work done or a passage of status/qualification; while we speak about certification when an authorized subject/body issues a certificate with the list of competences detected.

The **contexts** where it is usually useful to make a competence assessment are many: in the selection of personnel, in the potential evaluation of employed people, in the analysis of training needs of an Organization, or, again, the competences analysis seems to be necessary for the recognition of credits for extra work done, or also to encourage the job offer to meet the demand, etc. According to the purpose they are made for, balances of competences can have different ways of development and different structures.

Competence assessment in career guidance distinguishes itself from the others because the person asks for it, in general, voluntarily and therefore the relationship with the balance counsellor is based, or at least it should be based, on full trust and cooperation.

The main purpose of the guidance activity is that of *helping the person to identify an aim and create a professional plan to reach it*. As already underlined by Parsons<sup>19</sup> in 1909 the professional objectives have to be identified taking into account 3 categories of factors: 1. a knowledge of his/her own characteristics (attitudes, skills, capacities, interests, resources, personal constraints, etc.); 2. the awareness of which are the necessary characteristics, the advantages and disadvantages, salaries, opportunities and perspectives in the different working environments; 3. a reasoning on the relationship between these two groups of factors. According to this, then, the guidance expert, during the interview with someone looking for professional goals, will attentively identify those expressions which show the presence of these personal factors, such as: *'I liked it a lot ...' / 'I didn't like it ...' / 'I'm really good at this' / 'I attended courses of ...' / 'I learnt this by myself'* and also try to identify those skills matured outside the working contexts and shown by sentences like *'In my spare time I do ...' / 'I learnt this from life ...'*, etc.

The identification and performance of his/her own competences can take place both through the account of his/her own educational and professional career and through the direct questions asked by the expert (*'Which are your strength points?'* etc.) or by using tests concerning interests, personality and aptitudes. Specific forms or activities can be used with the aim of letting the most significant experiences done arise.

The balance interview will be planned in different phases: during a **first phase** – of opening – the counsellor will be able to follow a double operational mode: letting the client talk freely about himself (*'balances of competences for stories'*, Selvatici, 2002 ) or invite him/her to ask

---

<sup>19</sup> Parsons F., *Op. cit.*



in systematic way to questions about elements considered important for a correct professional choice ('balances of competences for factors'). In a **later phase** the counsellor will work together with the client in identifying professional aims coherent with his/her skills and he will do that by reading the professional profiles, interviews with privileged witnesses, guidance traineeships, etc. in order to define later instruments and steps necessary to reach them.

In July 2008 Isfol produced a document to regulate this theme according to the French model of the '*bilan de competences*', where competence assessment is defined as a *separate service, different from the other guidance services*. The effort is that of systematizing and regulating a sector – precisely the one of guidance- that to this day in Italy is still very confused: from the Isfol's study one notices that the balance activities must be carried out exclusively by authorised Balance Centers; that the duration of a balance career, to be realised in 2 months, should last from 16 to 24 hours and provide at least 4 individual interviews; finally, that activities must be carried out by a team composed of at least three people: a balance counsellor, an information operator and the person in charge of the center; if the activity implies the use of tests, one should introduce in the team a fourth professional, a psychologist. A fundamental tool to manage a career guidance is the drawing-up of a **Balance report**, that is a document composed of a series of forms filled by the counsellor together with the person-subject of the assessment. Here is an example:

<b>BALANCE REPORT</b>	
<b>1. GENERAL DATA</b>	<b>Counsellor:</b> <b>Period of activity:</b> <b>Date:</b> <b>Dates of meetings:</b> <b>total hours:</b>
<b>2. PERSONAL DATA</b>	<b>Name and Surname:</b> <b>Date of birth:</b> <b>Address:</b> <b>Phone:</b> <b>E-mail:</b>
<b>3. REASONS FOR THE BALANCE REQUEST</b>	<i>I.E. the person has been fired and is searching for a new job</i>



<p><b>4. DEVELOPMENT OF BALANCE CAREER</b></p>	<p><i>i.e. the counsellor's activity has aimed to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>rebuild the educational and professional career;</i></li> <li>- <i>analyse the activities carried out and the technical and transversal skills learnt;</i></li> </ul> <p><i>analyse interests, professional aspirations and personal constraints;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>elaborate a professional plan and check its feasibility.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>5. EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CAREER</b></p>	
<p><b>5. a. Educational experiences (Form 1)</b></p>	<p><i>Ex. choice of the course of studies; correspondence of the educational careers with personal aptitudes etc.</i></p>
<p><b>5. b. Professional experiences (Form 2)</b></p>	<p><i>Ex. Account of professional career(s); which tasks; rewards and frustrations; how does work mix into private life; which emotions, feelings, aspirations?</i></p>
<p><b>6. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS</b></p>	
<p><b>6. a. Interests (Form 3)</b></p>	<p><i>What are the aspirations: are they the same, have they changed? If they have, what are the current interests?</i></p>
<p><b>6. b. Aptitudes/transferable skills (Form 4)</b></p>	<p><i>Transferable skills concern the person: communication skills, relationship with other people, listening, understanding, keeping, cooperating.</i></p>
<p><b>6. c. Personality traits (Form 5)</b></p>	<p><i>Personality characters, such as: being introvert/extrovert, predisposed to work alone/ in team, etc.</i></p>
<p><b>6. d. Technical knowledge and skills (Form 6)</b></p>	<p><i>Technical knowledge and skills have been learnt on the work site, so they are linked to the job and position had.</i></p>
<p><b>7. PROFESSIONAL PLAN (Form 7)</b></p>	<p><i>Elements taken into consideration in the balance should show a professional plan coherent with the competences acquired, but also with the possible inclinations shown over the years that could be borrowed.</i></p> <p><i>The counsellor will show the steps to follow to reach the new aim :i.e. gathering information about the job to search for; possible specialization courses and</i></p>



	<i>traineeships to do to improve competences, etc.</i>
<b>8. MORE CONTACTS</b>	<i>The counsellor establishes with the person to meet again when new information is collected (announcements, possibility of interviews, etc.) to take stock of the situation.</i>

## ***b. Assessment techniques***

Assessment can be defined as that process thanks to which one checks and proves, in measurable terms, the knowledge, skills and aptitudes of an individual or a group of people.

This is an evaluation technique based on observation and analysis of behaviours of an individual or group facing tasks of elaboration, decision and discussion.

Applicable to the world of education in general, in the more specific field of training, assessment techniques are the set of procedures used to identify people who have got certain characteristics or predispositions considered successful to recover a certain organizational position.

A good assessment must be based on the reconstruction (*in settings*) of tasks and responsibilities of a job and on observation of the behaviour before such tasks and responsibilities. It must be composed of a series of tests under observation, both individual and in group, accurately selected according to the role/task and the related organizational behaviours linked to it, which demand specific knowledge or competences. This method of assessment spurs reactions and behaviours at different levels, such as the emotional one, the one concerning relationships, the interactive one, the cognitive, the decision-making and the motivation ones, and it allows the assessors to gather useful information about potentials and limits of people implicated.



A possible **assessment procedure**, that will be later on analyzed in detail, studying the different operational methodologies through which one can make an assessment, could be divided into the following phases:

- 1) **Preparation and organization**
- 2) **Realization**
- 3) **Data processing and drafting of profiles**
- 4) **Immediate or future use of results**

The people implicated in the process will be: participants, the observer/s and a possible coordinator.

***But, how can we choose them? Which techniques should we use? To reach which aims?***

One should then define a series of variables before organizing the assessment, no matter which kind of assessment it is. We could summarize them as follows:

- » *Identifying assessment's aims*
- » *Determining the application context*
- » *Establishing the object of the assessment's dimensions*
- » *Establishing the number of participants*
- » *Organizing times and logistical aspects*
- » *Determining other techniques used*
- » *From a practical and organizational point of view, it will be necessary:*
  - » *To define the job description*
  - » *To define the dimensions to assess*
  - » *To prepare the exercises*
  - » *To prepare tools to gather data (i.e. observation forms)*



- » *To define a planning of activities (calendar; order of presentation; number of days)*
- » *To do always a check of times*
- » *To check materials*

There are different ways to do an assessment, here listed:

⇒ **The Assessment Center**

It is one of the most interesting and complete operational methodologies in the field of assessment, based on simulations (in groups or individually) to detect capacities considered fundamental to fill a particular position.

The assessment center is a very important instrument for the activities of selection, potential evaluation, guidance, training and company's reorganization and it is used especially by big companies. In comparison with any other methodology used to identify and evaluate aptitudes and personality characteristics, it is different, because it is particularly effective and reliable to detect the skills characterizing the positions/jobs taken into examination, because:

- *The most **reliable** way to verify whether a person will behave in the awaited way is proving it through **simulations** very close to the same reality;*
- *This same 'simulated' context represents an **active and stimulating context** for participants, motivated to show and risk their real skills;*
- ***Observation** is **objective**, only based on statements, attitudes, behaviours of the individual or group. Furthermore, one reduces the risk of subjective assessments thanks to the participation of **more expert observers**;*
- *It allows to gather a **very high number of data**;*
- *It is **flexible** and its application is determined by the **many techniques** available and by the different degrees of close examination that each of them allows;*
- *At the end of assessment **information** goes back to participant in the shape of interview, which enables a moment of check, involvement and consciousness.*



It is particularly favourable when one wants to:

- » *Assess the applicants deeply;*
- » *Assess the potential of people called to carry out complex activities;*
- » *Assess the level of specific skills;*
- » *Assess or sensitize personnel of the company's need s of flexibility and mobility;*
- » *Identify the training needs concerning management, organization and relationships.*

An intervention of Assessment Center establishes the following phases before the realization of the same assessment:

- 1) Determining of company's needs and check of the possibility of using the methodology
- 2) Analysis of the organization, identifying of position and people to examine
- 3) Choice of skills or dimensions which characterize the positions taken into consideration
- 4) Preparation of exercises and simulations which better adapt to the detection of dimensions
- 5) Designation of possible company's observers and their training
- 6) Designation of the possible company's resource who will be Responsible in charge for the Project

After doing all this, one can start organizing the Assessment Center, planning the assessment sessions as follows:

- » *Identifying people involved as participants and observers, the place and related logistic needs;*



- » *Checking the preliminary method of communicating the initiative to the interested parties, defining the modality of convocations and interviews;*
- » *Combining (with possible turnovers) participants with observers;*
- » *Observing and recording the behaviours in the different established simulations;*
- » *Gathering and summarizing the collected data, defining a profile for each participant done by the whole team of observers;*
- » *Showing profiles to each participant, with a direct reference to the behaviours had and to the related dimensions detected in positive and negative way;*
- » *Using profiles together with other data to establish turnovers and career plans; promotions, horizontal movements and training interventions.*

### ⇒ **360- Degree Assessment**

It is an assessment method that allows to receive and compare the assessments of different subjects. The web system gives a questionnaire not only to the interested applicant, to make a self-evaluation (Self Assessment), but also to his/her chief, co-workers and colleagues (360-Degree Assessment), who receive personal usernames and passwords valid for the period necessary to fill the same questionnaires. The applicant cannot see the results of the 360-Degree assessment, but only a mean of the results contained in the questionnaires proposed to his/her chiefs, co-workers and subordinates. Anyway both questionnaires, that concerning the Self Assessment and the one for the 360-Degree Assessment, are similar, made in the same way, and concern the activities and competences requested in the job profile. The questionnaire is structured in such a way to let the Manager to express an evaluation judgment (SELF-evaluation) on his/her own competences, which will be then compared directly with the judgments given by other subjects (i.e. co-operators, chief, colleagues, subordinates, clients, suppliers and whoever is asked to enter the feedback process).

The aim of this 360-Degree assessment process is that of giving a feedback over a large range of working competences.

360-Degree feedback is a quite common procedure in Anglo-Saxon Countries, while in Italy it is still not well known and not much applied.



The method consists of the assessment given by many organizational actors about a manager (or about other company's subjects who have different roles or duties, about company's departments and/or other things). 360-Degree assessment process helps to focus on strength points and the improvement areas of the people object of assessment.

Some competences to evaluate can be:

- **Integrity:** ethics, reliability, self-assessment capacity, capacity of avoiding risks, responsibility;
- **Creativity:** innovation, adaptability, holistic thought, strategic thinking, idea generation;
- **Logical and Analytical Skills:** rationality, numerical competences, critical evaluation, decision-making, analytical capacity;
- **Interpersonal skills:** interpersonal relationship skills, empathy, interpersonal support, diplomacy, assertiveness;
- **Resilience:** balance, goodwill, temperance, trust, judiciousness;
- **Persuasiveness:** communication competences, writing skills, coaching, public presence, listening skills;
- **Planning and Organization:** time management, orientation to future, establishing of priorities, delegation skill, planning;
- **Quality Orientation:** meticulousness, concentration on tasks, completing of tasks, regularity, high standards;
- **Energy and Motivation:** energy, self-motivation, orientation to results, capacity of motivation, initiative.

The questionnaire is usually given and managed exclusively online. The software that accompanies the 360-Degree assessment allows to manage the entire assessment process, and so to make:

**a) a choice of the forms to give: you can decide whether to customize the questionnaire, possibly removing from a specific analysis all competences considered superfluous for the feedback profile;**



- b) the creation of new competences;**
- c) a choice and selection of the assessors for the creation of invitations to participate to the assessment process. Each participant will give his/her feedback in a totally anonymous way;**
- d) the processing of the feedback profile and the analysis of the results obtained.**

The questionnaire, as it is divided into different forms, can be structured according to the needs of the specific gathering or assessment. One can comprise into the feedback profile also open questions.

Then there is a final report, which is very clear and brief, and it shows for each area assessed and for each item presented the strength points and the improvement areas. Some graphs can give the possibility to compare directly the evaluations expressed by each subject taking part to the process (the SELF, co-workers, subordinates, the leader, clients, suppliers, etc.).

#### ⇒ **Individual assessment**

It is a multidimensional assessment technique (use of instruments focused on simulation, on competences and on applicants' life, such as interviews, presentations, role-plays, management exercises, psycho-professional tests). It allows to look at the performance and behaviour of applicants in a systematic way.

#### **Objective:**

Assessment is useful from one side to determine competences and development possibilities related to a profile with pre-established requirements and, on the other side, to forecast the matching between the future position and the applicant, for instance when it is imminent the need of taking a role of manager. The method to follow to do an effective individual assessment implies that the profile of competences required is well defined with the client; also, that a matrix is created, which establishes the needs and instruments used (attribution of instruments suitable to evaluate pre-established criteria); and that instruments close to the client's reality are processed.

The realization of such a kind of assessment requires, as already specified,:

- ⇒ **The drawing-up of a written report including recommendations**
- ⇒ **The individual Feedback to the applicant**



⇒ **On demand, a development interview with both applicant and client**

⇒ **The Development Center**

The development center is the individual potential evaluation of people aiming to development.

Inside a simulated set similar to that of the client's organization, through a series of tests, the protagonist of the intervention plays a role higher than his/her own one, so revealing the capacity to fill it.

Assessment evaluates the readiness (how much that person is ready to fill a new or higher position) and the potential (to fill the above-mentioned role within a period of time of 6/12 months when he/she commits in a development plan).

The performance modality usually implies 4 tests:

- A personality and/or logical *test*;
- An interview;
- two *role plays*, where the protagonist of the intervention has the role of a chief who interacts with co-workers, his/her equals or bosses.

The tests results, showed in a form divided into specific and graduated behaviours allow to check the expression of the selected competences shared by counsellors and clients (i. e. management of co-workers, leadership, effective communication).

The development center is particularly indicated when it is necessary to evaluate and support with development young or talented people called to fill new or higher positions. The development center can be done both through group tests and a little number of assessors, and through the exam of a single person by two assessors, when the position is particularly important and the choice to make can have great effects on the role and performance in business.

This is a methodology to develop competences, that encourages the participation of the final user through the personalization and sharing of the process of diagnosis of the development need. The Development Center, tank to counselling, gives to managers a higher awareness of their points of strength and weakness. The Development Center is characterized by an analysis



of need, usually done through a preliminary interview and the project of a plan of individual growth.

The fields of application of this methodology are:

- 1. Interventions of customized counselling;**
- 2. Potential evaluation; check and possibility of adaptation to a role, or different roles, of the same or higher complexity;**
- 3. Identifying of training needs in a very specific way;**
- 4. Checking whether there are the skills necessary to fill different positions (guidance, development, career plans, turnovers).**

The Development Center is another kind of group Assessment Center.

The participants are already employees of the company. The main purpose of the Development Center is the development of the same applicants.

### ***c. Potential evaluation***

#### **What is Potential evaluation?**

**Potential evaluation** is a major tool to plan, enhance and motivate people, and it becomes essential in cases of promotion or diversification career, more and more frequent in the current society characterized by working scenarios that are uncertain and changeable.

An organization/body, through the operating system of the personnel evaluation, can express for each worker, periodically and according to homogeneous criteria, a judgment on his/her output and his/her professional characteristics that show themselves in the execution of work.

Through the personnel evaluation one can:

- improve the performances of human resources, aiming to reach company's purposes;
- identify competences (that is to say knowledge, behaviours and skills, summarized in the formula 'know, know how to be and how to do') and the potential of human resources, in order to use them in the best way;
- identify the real essence of human resources and the possible need of improving them through the training of existing personnel or the recruitment of new personnel;



- give an objective input to the incentivizing system of a company, according to which one can decide the incentives (wage rises, one-off awards, career progressions, etc.) and sanctions to personnel.

Evaluation can be founded on different aspects, according to which one identifies three methodologies commonly known as the ‘3 Ps’:

- **Evaluation of Positions**;
- **Evaluation of Performances**;
- **Potential evaluation.**

If the **Evaluation of Positions** and the **Evaluation of Performances** are key-tools to manage immediate or short-term actions, the need to prepare the organization and its resources to possible medium- or short period changes makes it necessary to create possible strategies to anticipate and support internal and external changes.

POSITION	PERFORMANCE	POTENTIAL
↓	↓	↓
How relevant tasks and responsibilities of the different roles are	How relevant what has been done is	How much could be given/done
↓	↓	↓
RESULTS DEMANDED IN A ROLE	RESULTS GOT BY A PERSON	RESULTS POSSIBLE FOR A PERSON
↓	↓	↓
PRESENT	PAST	FUTURE
Evaluation is done analysing COMPLEXITY/RESPONSABILITIES of a role	Evaluation is done analysing RESULTS/THINGS HAPPENED in the action of each individual	Evaluation is done analysing PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS of each individual
EXAMPLES: Economic dimensions	EXAMPLES: Objectives reached	EXAMPLES: Cooperation

Complexity of problems Level of Autonomy	Mistakes done	Creativity Autonomy
---	---------------	------------------------

Source: Humanware s.a.s.

### Purposes of potential evaluation

The **purpose** of potential evaluation is to foresee the contribution that the same worker could give in the future, maybe in a different position, and identify the possibilities to employ successfully the worker in other positions, even with more responsibilities, through internal mobility and career paths. This is a very useful instrument to plan, enhance and motivate people and it becomes indispensable in the following cases:

- *Diversification between managerial career and technical /professional career;*
- *Projection towards new sectors of activity;*
- *Integrated management of Human Resources.*

It concentrates its attention on the worker's potential, that is to say on the unexpressed competences that he/she has got but which are not used in the position that he/she currently fills (because they are not demanded or less demanded than how they could be). The current company's scenarios, uncertain and characterized by frequent changes, with the need of preparing its resources to possible medium and long term changes of direction, make indispensable the creation of hypotheses that anticipate the internal and external evolutions. In this sense, the **Potential evaluation** has the basic aim to make the planning of possible organizational changes easier, allowing the available resources -and their degree of flexibility- to be more visible, and also to offer the essential support to all activities of development of people, making their right placement and improvement possible. Such evaluation focuses on people in prospect and independently from the current role: it consists of the analysis of skills and aptitudes present in an individual (not necessarily expressed in the current working activity) and their evaluation in relation to the demanded requirements for roles others than the current ones.

In this perspective, the use of the Potential Evaluation is clearly functional to many contexts to reach specific aims such as:

- selection of professional resources from the outside and/or inside;



- plans of development, mobility and career;
- possible organizational ‘turnovers’;
- replacement tables;
- training interventions;
- *retention* policies on critical resources;
- check of the appropriateness of particular resources to the role they fill (usually, in these cases, they are key-roles).

A strategy of the **Evaluation of Potential** done in correct and systematic way, within a complex management of human resources aimed to the global development of the organization, will have to have a positive effect on the individual performance, as well as on the company’s performances, so realizing a series of aims, such as:

- **Organizational flexibility**, as it gives the possibility to verify the degree of replacement of resources (replacement tables) and planning of replacements
- **The aim of development**, for the planning and guidance of the individual’s guidance and the cracking of the effectiveness of the career history;
- **Training aims**, to identify the individual training need and the global areas of development;
- **The improvement of the internal atmosphere**, as it allows to evaluate possible needs of interventions on the ‘atmosphere’ or on the internal communication to strengthen the knowledge and sharing of aims, of business and of the company’s values system.

The aim of the **Evaluation of Potential** is, then, that of identifying and evaluating the points of strength, the areas of improvement and the possibilities of development of a resource not theoretically, but by putting the process of *assessment* in the specific context of the organizational structure one operates into, and in the existing roles. The **Evaluation of Potential** is a ‘foresight’ on professional behaviours of the person, in view of possible future roles to be assigned, in terms of:



⇒ *Skills and possibilities to fill more complex roles in comparison with the current one;*

⇒ *aptitudes, ambitions and personal aspirations of development.*

To do an effective **Evaluation of Potential** it is necessary to draw up previously a plan of project where the steps, times and ways of development are defined, as shown in the following table:

PLANNING FOR A POTENTIAL EVALUATION

1)	Definition of reference people
2)	Choice of the approach, according to the specific company's need and the requirements demanded
3)	Establishing of the personal characteristics to evaluate
4)	Planning of the diagnostic instruments to use
5)	Analysis of the possible links to activities of Selection, Evaluation of Performances and Careers planning
6)	Training of the internal assessors team
7)	Carrying out of the Evaluation Program according to the chosen mode
8)	Presentation and Sharing of Final Results

**Evaluation methods and instruments**

*How to evaluate the potential?*



As every prevision activity, the Potential evaluation is complex. As for the methodology goes, there exist two kinds of evaluation:

- **absolute**: this is a potential evaluation of the individual and his/her qualities, independently from role or time;
- **relative**: evaluation aims to get elements referred to the future development of the person but starting from his/her performances and position.

Methods used in the potential evaluation are those used for the mapping of competence profiles and they are different from each other and almost heterogeneous. As far as it concerns, on the contrary, **instruments for evaluation**, a classification criterion that is by now consolidated, tends to recognize, according to specific requirements, the following types:

- **indirect methods**, which do not imply the involvement of the interested party (interview to his/her direct boss; 360-Degree questionnaires; development report);
- **direct methods**, that, on the contrary, imply the involvement of the interested party (interview about behaviours; Bei: *Behavioral event interview*; biographic questionnaire; tests and questionnaires; evaluation through Assessment Center, of group of 8-12 people with group tests, group dynamics, individual interviews).
- **mixed methods**, that provide for the evaluation of results both of the interview to the direct boss and of the direct observation (Assessment Center);
- **self-evaluation methods**, that imply an interview guided by one or more assessors, where the evaluated applicant is stimulated to tell about work experiences where he/she applied the skills object of the survey.

Within these methods, some of the most used instruments used for a Potential evaluation are:

- **Individual interview**

It is based on an individual interview with the interested person. Almost abandoned in the '80s and used only for those evaluated people one did not want to invest much on, or to whom it was not possible to propose complex methodologies such as the Assessment (that demanded to get through difficult tests during one-two days), it made a comeback, at least in Italy, at the end of '90s thanks to the effect of the spreading of competences model. Through the diffusion of such model, as a matter of fact, one has known in Italy the methodology of the situational interview



(the Behaviour Event Interview or the STAR - Situation Task Action Result) which imposes the identifying of significant events of the working life of the evaluated person and the following survey of the behaviours really had in such circumstances. The technique of individual interview, with theoretical and methodological aids of the Bei or of the Star, bases itself on a philosophy totally different if compared with the AC; while this latter presupposes, as a matter of fact, the observation of people in experimental situations, created ad hoc, the individual interview demands the need of an inquiry into the past as an aid for a prospecting of behaviours of the subject in the future.

- **Behavioural event interview** (interviews of analysis of specific episodes where competences have shown). Realization of B.E.I. interviews to *teams* of top managers and privileged witnesses from which one can deduce normal practices and behaviours that imply the values and determine the excellence in the organization. B.E.I. are individual interviews that last about 1h30', audio-recorded. B.E.I. method consists of the investigation of values and areas of management behaviours, asking the interviewee to reconstruct satisfying and not-satisfying experiences. The structure of a B.E.I. provides for:

- a deep analysis of an episode that happened
- a deep analysis of a failure
- a deep analysis of a second episode that happened.

From the interviewees' accounts one identifies the behaviours from which one can define the set of practices related to the investigated area. Behaviours are then grouped in clusters of meaning, that represent competences, to which one gives a name congruent with the culture and organizational language.

- **Hierarchical interview.** This evaluation technique, often used together with the previous one, is based on an interview done to the direct superior and possibly also to this latter's superior. It has always been used almost uniquely for managers' evaluation, thanks to its 'discretion', as it does not even ask the evaluated person to enter into the knowledge of an evaluation process of himself/herself; such technique is based on a philosophy close to that of



the Individual Interview: if you want to know the future behavior you need to investigate the past behaviour. Even if very discreet, such methodology, especially if integrated with improving techniques such as BEI or STAR, gave many problems to the reliability of results, as it is based on accounts rather than on the direct knowledge of the evaluated person. One has also to consider, then, that accounts cannot necessarily be considered truthful, as sometimes they are told by people who scarcely know the applicant or who have got little evaluation capacity.

- **Reversed Assessment**

It is a method that reaches the potential evaluation through the help of a Committee composed by the superiors or the ‘clients’ of the person evaluated. It is done through the STAR method, that is to say through the group analysis of episode of working life really happened, guided by a specialist of the technique. It is a method very similar to the hierarchical interview done with the STAR method, with the exception that one interviews not only a subject, but a group of people at the same time. In comparison with the hierarchical interview it has the advantage to hear and compare more assessors, so reducing the subjective mistake range of evaluations.

In order to have truthful results of the evaluation it is necessary that each characteristic to identify is covered by more instruments. The potential evaluation represents a very precise methodology that produces different instruments, schematized and easy-to-read, to manage the potential of the company’s employees. Assessment instruments which it is possible to use are:

1. **Individual tests:**

- aptitude tests
- intelligence/reasoning tests
- personality questionnaires
- personality tests
- motivation tests
- technical tests of Problem solving concerning questionnaires related to the position
- organizational tests: in basket tests



## 2. Group tests:

- group discussion
- business game
- company's group tests

## 3. Individual interview:

- motivation interview
- *stress interview*

In the case that one uses more instruments, one proceeds with a synthesis and an analysis of results. Then there is the phase of the restitution of results to the person, underlying the points of strength (where it is possible to invest even further) and of weakness (where it is possible to intervene for an improvement). The qualities that are evaluated to define the person's potential are many, because they depend on the context and the type of position they fill. There exist, anyhow, some characteristics that are very important and are considered constantly: they are the so-called '*critical managerial dimensions*', among which:

- intellectual skills (problem solving, gathering, information, work out strategies...);
- social or relational skills (leadership, negotiating, ...);
- management skills (initiative, decision, control, ...);
- innovative skills (creativity, flexibility and adaptability to changes, ...);
- emotional skills (management of stress and emotional stability, ...).

The potential evaluation aims to catch the presence of these elements, even if not necessarily expressed in the current working activity.

The more punctual the definition of factors and characteristics chosen is, the more reliable and usable is the evaluation of results obtained. A possible methodology of intervention could be summarized in the following phases:

- Definition of the population of reference;

- Choice of the method according to the company’s specifications and the precision requirements demanded (for example the creation of a reference table for the gathering);
- Definition of personal characteristics to evaluate;
- Planning of diagnostic instruments to use;
- Analysis of possible links with activity of Selection, Evaluation of Performances and Careers Planning;
- Training of the internal assessors team;
- Carrying out of the Evaluation Program according to the chosen mode;
- Presentation of Final Results.

An example of characteristics table object of the analysis, applicable for example to a position of a Purchasing Manager, could be the following one, where importance levels are evaluated according to these standards: VI (very important); I (important); QI (quite important); NVI (not very important); NI (not important).

<b>LISTENING SKILL</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>ASSERTIVITY</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>INITIATIVE</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>DYNAMISM</b>	<b>NVI</b>
<b>ORIENTATION TO RESULTS</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>CORDIALITY</b>	<b>NVI</b>
<b>COOPERATION</b>	<b>QI</b>
<b>DOMINANCE</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>PROBLEM SOLVING</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>ETC.</b>	

Characteristics detected are then subdivided into importance categories (from VERY IMPORTANT to NOT IMPORTANT, as in the above described range) and to each of the



characteristics taken into examination one gives a ‘optimal score’ in a range from zero to 100. The optimal score is then compared with the results of potential evaluation in order to quantify the ‘gap’ between the person’s potential and the position and to define and activate the proper corrective and development actions (training, career planning, position change, etc.).

### Conclusions

The object of PE is the observation of a set of characteristics of a person, that assume different terms depending on whether the organization/body has developed a managerial model of human resources founded on competences or on the description of roles based on profiles and related characteristics (*job description*), on the specific tasks and agreement terms.

The common element that must guide the PE is the focusing on *behaviours*, on *aptitudes* and *skills* of the resource, delegating to Evaluation and Performance the task of detecting technical and professional skills of the subject, naturally expressed in the working environment and in the position filled, and so more easily and objectively assessable by the direct hierarchical superior. Behaviours and skills that one observes and evaluate can then be referred to a generic table of ideal personal qualities and dimensions. In the choice of elements to evaluate the ideal number of factors should vary from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 6. As far as the method of establishing of dimensions to assess is concerned, a valid approach, applicable to different managerial models, is the *factorial method*, whose main purpose is that of reducing some variables to a fewer number of factors (categories), detectable both empirically (observation), and statistically (for example personality and aptitude questionnaires).

In the process of PE the first step is to calibrate the reference profiles, selecting the main factors and living to them a measuring range that allows to make then a comparison between the characteristics arisen and those desired. Aside from the methodologies employed, this phase is common to all processes of PE and it should be managed very carefully: as a matter of fact, the more accurate the definition of factors and characteristics chosen is, the more reliable will be the evaluation of results obtained. The following table shows the structure of the **Process of Evaluation of Personnel** with the specification of **Phases**, **Activities** and **Outputs**.

PHASE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
-------	----------	--------



PHASE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
1. Analysis and definition of awaited distinctive competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview and possible filling of a questionnaire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role profile with connected awaited description of competences</li> </ul>
2. Methodological choice of potential evaluation and preparation of instruments for the assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaboration of exercises and interpretation grids of behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calibrated exercises on competence profiles</li> </ul>
3. Observation and assessment of applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Execution of plenary exercises and feed-back by assessors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence profile in possession of the resources</li> </ul>
4. Check of the correspondence between awaited competences and those owned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison between profiles of awaited competences and those owned</li> <li>• Cross-evaluations of observers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matrix of gap-analysis</li> </ul>
5. Feed-back interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition of the development plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development path 'agreed' with the evaluation resource</li> </ul>
6. Identifying of development plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing of individual <i>action plans</i></li> <li>• Improving actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared programs to continuously improve competences</li> </ul>
7. Carrying-out of initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring of initiatives (management and training initiatives)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check forms/grids</li> <li>• Planning of a tracing system</li> </ul>



PHASE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
8. Check of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying of checking tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracing system</li> </ul>

Analyzing the process of potential evaluation, it is necessary to underline the importance of the **feedback interview**, in order to have a whole correct and valid process: this is the delicate phase in which the assessor gives back to the applicant observations, measuring and possible suggestions for the future. The main purposes of the feedback interview are:

- » **equity**, to understand the data the relationship or development process have been based on; it guarantees equal opportunities and can reduce prejudices and resistance;
- » **check of distortion factors**, as if people know they will receive a feedback about the results obtained, they will be encouraged to complete the same in a more objective way; discussing results and the relationship these have with other information concerning the participant helps to control possible mistake sources and to obtain a higher degree of accuracy in the interpretation;
- » **motivation**, because if people know they will be able to discuss tests results they are going to do, they will probably be more motivated towards them;
- » **development of people**, because sharing results with people helps them to feel more involved and responsible of their professional development career;
- » **acceptance of purposes**, as tests and simulations can seem sometimes practices distant from daily reality; giving a feedback can, on the contrary, reassure people and make them less critical about both the techniques used and the same organization that uses them.

#### **d. Guidance interview**

The guidance interview is one of the most effective tools used to support a career guidance: it gives a counselling and, when necessary, a psychological support, in relation to professional choices. In the *Guidance Counselling* practices, through the formula of the interview, one tries



to establish a helpful relationship between the *counselor* operator and the person, in order to face and successfully pass the development tasks connected to the training and working experience; such kind of intervention cannot be limited to the temporary crisis situation, or just represent an answer mode to specific difficult situations (such as the lost of a job) but it also has to be a prevention action, aimed to the development and growth of the person in some essential moments of his training and/or working process of socialization. For such reason *Guidance Counselling*, particularly during the interview, wants to activate and stimulate in the person a slow and gradual process of self-emancipation.

The professional counsellor, during the guidance interview/s, should then encourage in the person:

- » a taking of decision concerning some *choices* that concern him/her;
- » a correct evaluation of the different *modalities of facing* critical situations.

## Functions of the guidance interview

### 1. Aptitudes and interests

- » gathering information concerning themes essential for the counsellor to give a proper suggestion;
- » the counsellor knows the questions to be done to formulate the ‘diagnosis’ and knows how to interpret the subject’s answers;
- » the interview is ‘directive’.

### 2. Competences and career development

- » helping the subject in his/her personal and professional developments all life long and in the management of *transitions*: discovery of himself/herself;
- » importance of *representation* of his/her own skills.

### 3. Discovery of oneself



- » discovering autonomously aspects of oneself to remodel one's own personality;
- » basic concepts: one's own personality and remodeling;
- » non- directive interview.

## Methodology of guidance interview

### 1. Methods based on himself/herself (existential approach):

- » Who am I really and who would I like to be?
- » How to become what I would like to be?

### 2. Methods based on the choice of studies and career (vocational approaches):

1. Which are the ways that are mostly convenient to me?

*In our society , where the practice of a job is considered a mean to build what one wants to be, these two categories of problems are strictly connected.*

Existential interview (Based on the subject)	Vocational interview (Based on a guidance request)
C. Rogers	C. Lecomte e L. Tremblay <i>Interview in 'work counselling'</i>
Personal Constructs (Kelly)	N. Gysberg: <i>Career counselling</i>
Support to the definition of objectives (Egan)	D. Super <i>Career Development Assessment</i>
R. Manthei	



## The existential interview (based on the subject )

### C. ROGERS (1951)

Though he influenced the guidance counselling in the 40's and 50's, Rogers has never openly spoken about guidance. His reflection, anyway, represented a great change in the studies about guidance, as:

2. *It moves the perspective to the subject, as an **active protagonist** of his/her own guidance process;*
3. *It offers a significant contribution as for the management of the counselling relationship (even if it is not a real theory that explains the relationship between person and job).*

The counsellor develops attitudes and behaviours aimed to the promotion of processes concerning the *self-realization* of clients. The control of the guidance process is into the subject. The guidance counselling, though enhancing an aspect of the person's life, does not lose sight of the unity of his/her identity, primary reference to which the specificity of the relationship between person and working activity must be traced back: it is just with relation to the interaction with the environment that the person **structures himself/herself**, that is to say he/she organizes a fluent and coherent representation of perceptions of features and relationships of himself/herself and of values annexed to those features and relationships.

The interview so becomes a *practice of the re-modeling of himself/herself* through which the subject can perceive some personal characteristics and some other aspects of 'his/her own world' that he/she usually cannot catch and he/she remodels himself/herself to become 'adequate' with his/her 'world', so as he/she has discovered it through the mediation activated by the counsellor. During the interview the counsellor's attitude, aiming to build an authentic and sincere relationship, should always be positive, he should not judge and should respect the subject, try to understand his/her needs starting from his/her same internal frame of reference.

*'To help you I will put myself aside and I will enter the world of your perception in the most complete way I am able to. I will become another myself for you. A secure occasion for you to examine yourself more clearly, to live yourself more deeply and to take more important decisions'* (Rogers, 1951)

### G. EGAN: SUPPORT TO THE DEFINITION OF OBJECTIVES (1982)



**Objectives of guidance interview:**

1. helping to identify your own goals;
2. stimulating the subject to commit, in order to reach them.

**Agreement method:**

- Presentation of the supporting methodology;
- Definition of the relationship between counsellor and client;
- Indication of responsibilities of counsellor and client;
- Limits of their relationships.

**Phases of counseling**

- ⇒ **IDENTIFICATION AND CLARIFICATION OF PROBLEM**
- ⇒ **DEVELOPMENT OF FAVOURITE SCENARIO**
- ⇒ **DEFINITION OF THE ACTION PLAN**

PHASES OF COUNSELLING:	Counsellor’s Objective is helping the client to:
1. Identification and clarification of the problem and of resources used and not used.	a) tell his/her own story; b) take awareness and perceiving new perspectives; c) identify problems, questions, preoccupations and resources.
2. Development of preferred scenario.	a) imagine a series of possibilities to improve his/her future; b) transform his/her preferred scenario into a real program; c) identify motivations that can guide him/her to realize the program he/she has built.
3. Definition of strategies and of an action plan.	a) imagine a series of strategies to put the plan into action; b) choose the most suitable strategies; c) formulate an action plan (define all steps necessary to reach the goals).

**R. MANTHEI (1997)**

**Phases of counselling** (similar to those by G. Egan):

A counsellor’s primary need is to take awareness of the social and cultural environment he is in:



- *This requires a work on himself /herself that helps the awareness about the cultural relativity of his/her values and practices;*
- *It allows to develop a quickness of thinking to evaluate correctly believings and behaviours other than his/hers.*

### **The ‘vocational’ interview (based on a guidance demand)**

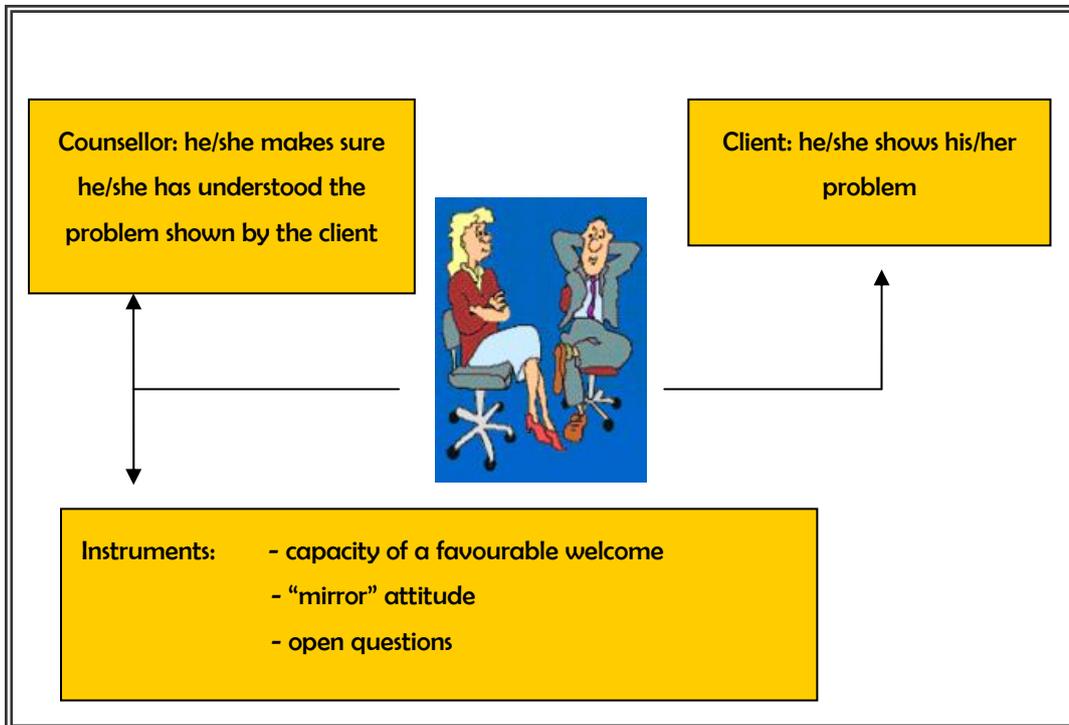
#### **C. LECOMTE E L. TREMBLAY (1987): INTERVIEW IN ‘COUNSELLING AT WORK’**

#### **3 steps:**

- 1. Identification of problem*
- 2. Clarification of problem*
- 3. Definition of objectives*

#### **1. Identification of problem**

- » Creation of a support and cooperation relationship, based on respect;
- » Formulation by the client of his/her own work problem;
- » In-depth examination of problem (definition as a restrictive statement, i.e. *‘I cannot find a job because I’m too old!’*);
- » Definition of the interview’s aim: to define clearly interview’s objectives.



## 2. Clarification of problem

- » Clarification of client's multidimensional experience: to translate into words his/her own understanding of the problem (how he/she lives it, how he/she puts it in the different contexts), to make repercussions explicit;
- » Clarification of resources and limits in terms of:
  - *Personal characteristics: attitudes, knowledge, skills, etc.;*
  - *Environmental characteristics: sources for interpersonal, family, and institutional help.*
- » Clarification of client's values, hypotheses and convictions as regards his/her own problem.

## 3. Definition of objectives

- » Formulation of a will of change (*'If I want to do this, then I have to ...'*);



- » Certification of the conditional statement: is the intention really realizable?
- » Definition of a plan to put into action the intention of change in terms of *concrete* actions.

## **N. GYSBERG (1998): CAREER COUNSELLING**

### **4 Phases:**

1. Construction of an alliance, a profitable relationship between counsellor and client;
2. Gathering of information;
3. Comprehension of information and formulation of hypotheses;
4. Construction of career objectives, definition of plans of action and conclusion.

### **1. The alliance/relationship between counsellor and client implies:**

- » Agreement between counsellor and client about the objectives to reach;
- » Agreement on the most suitable means to use to reach them;
- » Construction of a link that allows the agreement on the importance to give to objectives and actions.

### **2. Gathering of information (Areas to explore):**

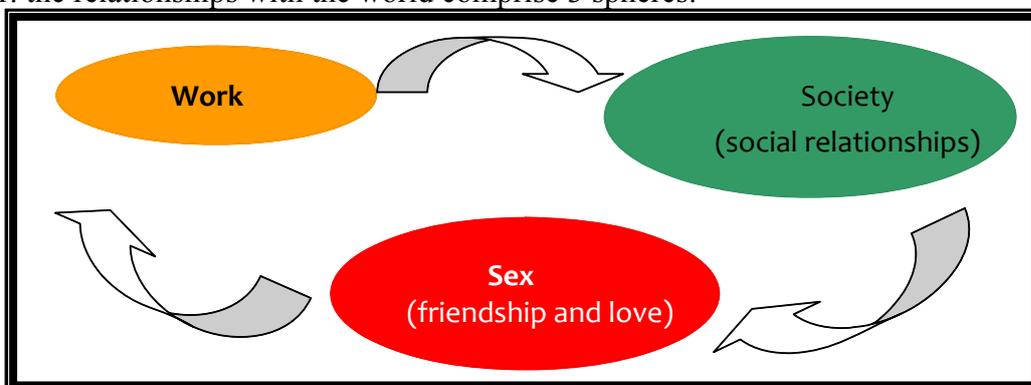
- » Interests, values and attitudes;
- » Representations concerning himself/herself, the others, the contexts;
- » Categories that structure his/her behaviours;
- » Identity in terms of ethnic origin and gender;
- » Personal and contextual obstacles and ties;
- » Styles of decision, etc.

### 3. Gathering of information (Tools):

- » Interview outline (*Life Career Assessment, LCA*);
- » Career genogram;
- » Classifications of jobs;
- » Cognitive tests;
- » Questionnaires concerning interests and personality;
- » Any other tool.

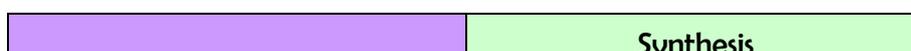
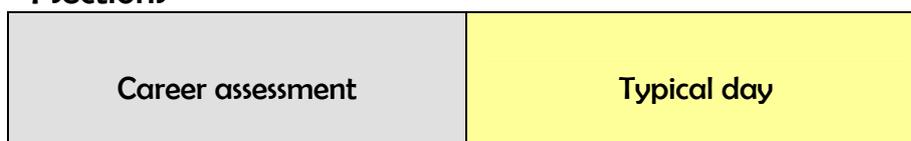
#### Gathering of information (Tools)

1) The interview outline (*Life Career Assessment, LCA*) is based on *individual psychology* by Adler: the relationships with the world comprise 3 spheres:



#### Interview Outline (*Life Career Assessment, LCA*): 4 sections

4 sections





## Strength points and obstacles

### ➤ Career assessment

- **work experiences** (*full time or not, employed or not*): description of last job, of its more or less satisfying aspects;
- **education or training** in progress and interests in this field: general evaluation, more or less satisfying aspects;
- **leisure activities**: free time, social life, friends.

### ➤ Typical day

- How do you organize your day?
- do you depend on your social environment, or not?
- are you systematic or spontaneous?
- are you persevering and attentive?

### ➤ Strength points and obstacles

- the three main points of strength, the resources at his/her disposal, the real utility of such resources;
- the three main obstacles: in relation to the points of strength and the themes arisen in the other sections of the interview.

### ➤ Synthesis

One underlines the information obtained in the interview and then one connects it with the defined objectives and with the problems to solve.

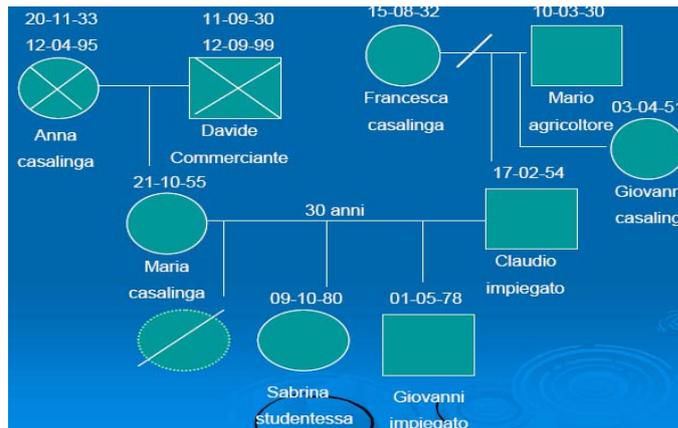
## 2) Career Genogram

It presents in a graphic form the information on the family, in order to have quickly an image of family complex configurations. It provides for three steps:

**1. Making objectives explicit:** clarification of the original family's dynamics (career, work, gender identity, role of the cultural socialization and of growth contexts);

## 2. Construction;

## 3. Analysis and interpretation.



Legend: casalinga: housewife; commerciante: shopkeeper; agricoltore: farmer; impiegato: employee; studentessa: student

## 3. Understanding the information and formulating hypotheses

### Counsellor's objectives

- » *To formulate hypotheses on the subject's objectives and problems;*
- » *To take an interest into cultural factors related to his/her gender identity that can influence him/her;*
- » *TO identify his/her possible resistances and take the into account.*

## 4. Construction of career objectives, definition of action plans, conclusion

### Counsellor's objectives

- » *To support in the definition of professional objectives, which must be:*
  - explicit
  - operational, that is to say declinable in a precise action plan
- » *To support in problem solution and in the clearing of limits linked to the environment and to other possible obstacles;*



» *To make, together with the client, a counseling balance.*

#### **D. SUPER (1992): CAREER DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT AND COUNSELLING**

It was born in the years 50's as a modality to help people to have satisfaction in their job and professional success. Such approach identifies in the *concept of self* the principle that explains the professional career: the work adaptation is the process that helps the person to develop and accept an adequate image of himself/herself and his/her role in the world of work and in the social context he/she belongs to. Super elaborates in this sense the ***theory of vocational development***, according to which the development is a continuous process that goes from dependence to autonomy, from egocentrism to social behaviour; the development shows differentiations and integrations of new parts and its final result is in the overall increase of the person's maturity. The different aspects of the development process are linked to different periods of the life course: Super thinks that there exist 5 decisive stages for the maturation of certain evolutionary objectives; every stage demarcates the higher functions of working life.

These stages are:

- 1. Growth**
- 2. Exploration**
- 3. Stabilization**
- 4. Maintaining**
- 5. Decline**

#### **Problems that can obstruct the vocational development**

- Problematic situation as 'dysfunctional': the person is not equipped to face development tasks in a certain age-phase (indecisions on future choices; stress in managing his/her own professional role, etc.);
- Critical situation connected to an 'anticipated' malfunction: functional current behaviour that risks not to be so anymore if the person does not change to face new environmental requests (problems of reorganization or lack of information about the evolution of job opportunities);
- 'blocked' professional development: a person's behaviour is adequate to tasks and it is socially approved but underestimated in comparison to the real potential.



### Main purposes of counselling:

- » *Promoting the awareness as regards one's working career;*
- » *To make choice processes easier in the transition moments.*

### Methodological assumptions:

Operating in such a way that people can realize general interpersonal and cognitive structures, that they have built in the previous development phases, to be more able to influence their next development.

### 4 phases for assessment:

1. 'Life space' (structure of different roles of client's life);
2. 'Life time';
3. Vocational identity ('objective');
4. Concept of professional self.

	1. LIFE SPACE	2. LIFE TIME	3. VOCATIONAL IDENTITY	4. CONCEPT OF PROFESSIONAL SELF
<b>MAIN OBJECTIVE:</b>	Assess the importance of professional role	Establish the point in the career where the client locates himself/herself and the tasks he/she has to carry out	Draw an objective 'portrait' of client in terms of interests, capacity and values	Establish the 'subjective' professional representations and life themes
<b>INSTRUMENTS:</b>	<p>Saliency Inventory (SI) by Neville and Super (1986), lets stimulate:</p> <p>a) client's participation;</p> <p>b) his/her commitment;</p> <p>c) his/her expectations in 5 types of activity (school, professional, family, community and free time).</p>	<p>Interview or <i>Adult Career Concerns Inventory</i> by Super, Thompson and Lindeman (1988):</p> <p>It helps to determine 'till what point the different tasks of each of the 5 steps (growth, exploration, stabilization, maintaining or disengagement) commit the client</p>	<p>- <i>Value Inventory</i> by Neville and Super (1986)</p> <p>- <i>Work Values Inventory</i> by Super (1970):</p>	<p>(qualitative methods):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lists of adjectives that describe people</li> <li>- Methods that underline the constructs inspired to Kelly</li> <li>- Genogram</li> </ul>

## **The Italian making of the Work Importance Study by Super (WIS – Professional Values Scale)**

WIS is a test that measures the values which influence the individual in his/her interpersonal attitudes and behaviours, in particular the work intrinsic and extrinsic values, usually not considered by the other measurement scales. Such scale can be used with high school students who are going to pass their school-leaving qualification, with university students and final year students, with adults occupied in the different fields of work or in any case in a working age. One refers to a person's behavior in particular situations and to the way he/she actually reacts to certain stimuli, so indicating which values he/she considers important and therefore that motivate his/her behaviour in the social life. This method can be used for psycho-diagnostic purposes, for selection, for *School- professional guidance* and in the *psycho clinic consultation*, in order to assess the subject's personality when he/she is put into real situations.

### **Structure**

This tool is composed of 30 items, each of them presents three different situations among which the subject has to choose the 'preferred one' and the 'less preferred'. Each situation refers to one of the 6 following scales: *support* (need to receive encouragement and support by the others), *conformity* (desire of respecting the rules), *recognition* (need to be considered important, at the center of the others' attention), *independence* (to be free to take his/her own decisions), *benevolence* (taking care of others), *leadership* (having control on others).

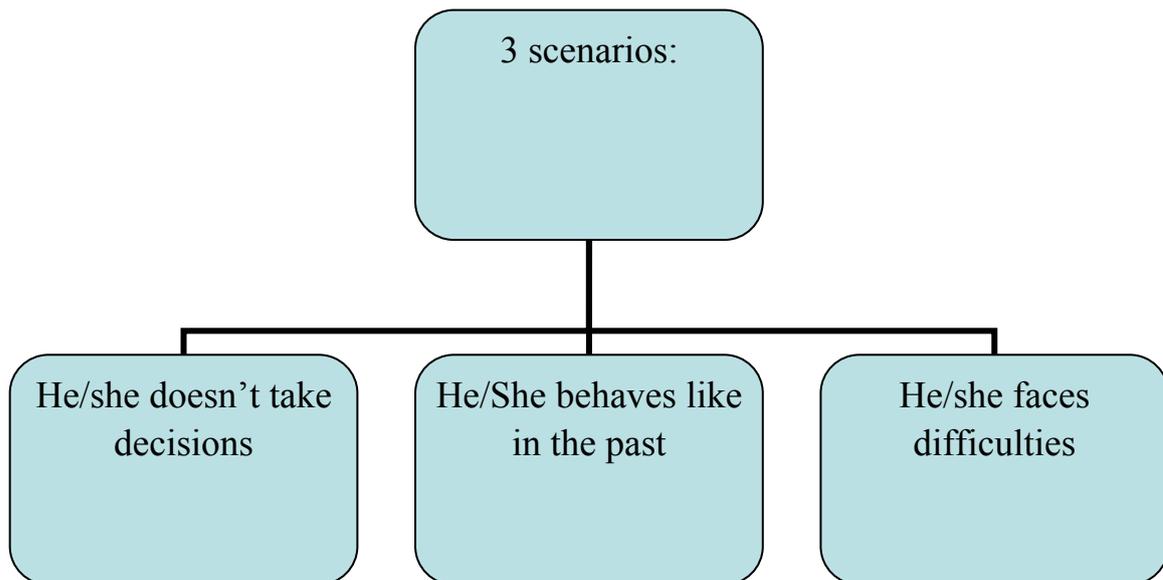
### **From assessment to counselling**

#### **ASSESSMENT**

#### **Results interpretation:**

**account that combines the vocational identity  
with the concept of professional "self"**

**3 scenarios**



## COUNSELLING

**It helps to develop and ascertain an integrated and adequate portrait of his/her own role, making it real through choices that put into action this concept of 'self'.**

### **Support/help interview and guidance interview**

One usually defines 'support interview' that kind of talk between two people where one of them finds himself/herself in a condition of pain/conflict (as regards to a certain situation or problem that he/she has to manage) and another person, instead, who is on an 'upper' level of adaptability/competences/skills, as for these same situations or kind of problem. The support interview is usually assigned to competent people, like psychologists or psychotherapists. The support interview is useful for guidance, as it allows a better comprehension by the helper of the problems the helped person has, a higher involvement of the helped person in this career and a higher activation of the person as for the interviews done in different modalities.

A good part of Italian guidance counsellors use the **technique or reformulation**, even if it is often learnt in an informal way. To reformulate means paraphrasing and/or summarizing with different words: it is possible to operate reformulations that focus on the objective content and reformulations that focus on feelings.



A fundamental part of guidance counselling activities consists, on the contrary, of giving information on training careers, professional figures, work research techniques and validating professional projects of clients, that is to say the constant reference to the labour market. This need requires, therefore, the use of strategies also other than reformulation within the guidance interview (i.e.: informing, suggesting) according to the client's needs.

### **Emotional dimension in guidance interview.**

Emotional dimension can have an essential influence on professional choice: if a client is living an emotional situation that in that moment influences his/her professional choices it will be a counsellor's duty and ability to create a good relationship and to stimulate the client to talk about it. Of course it is not necessary to analyze in depth the emotional life if this does not seem important for the guidance interview. Showing one's emotionality is anyway always important and positive, as it underlines client's trust in the counsellor and, very often, after the revelation of one's emotional life the guidance activity will be more constructive. Personal experiences expressed cannot depend on guidance problems (for example a divorce in progress) even if they can be linked to guidance themes (divorce obliges a person to find a job). In other cases they are directly connected to contingent guidance themes, as for instance a strong sense of frustration after a dismissal or a downgrading, or connected to innate personal problems, like the insecurity due to a little self-esteem. In the cases of client's personal difficulties, the counsellor, if expert and if the he/she has at his/her disposal and his/her assignment imply this possibility, will be able to create instruments suitable to act also on personality within the limits naturally belonging to his/her competence; for further problem he/she will be able to send the client to services of psychological assistance, public or private, though continuing to follow him/her as for the guidance problems.

### **e. Career coaching**

In current society, where market tends to reduce the sale of products in favour of the improving of services, human resources become more and more the center and the fundamental capital of every kind of organization: for the manager/leader it becomes indispensable to get the highest output by his/her own collaborators and, in order to get that, it is essential that people improve their self-



esteem, know their value and never lose sight of their capacity of being able to start over, in any personal and/or professional phase of their life.

In this sense coaching represents not only a useful tool managers/leaders can turn to in the management of relationships with colleagues and/or collaborators, not only a technique with which people can solve conflicts through the improvement of their relational capacity, but it is especially a different way of looking at people, that becomes a different way of dealing with the others.

The development and appearance of potential belonging to each person, colleague, collaborator, produces balance and harmony in every situation: competition becomes cooperation, so realizing positive results in the relationship between people, for the team's and company's productiveness.

A company that aims to the creation and activation of coaching careers is a company that bets on people, and that aims to create awareness and to share responsibilities. The awareness allows a higher performance, a higher learning, interest and involvement. Responsibility generates the individuation of the specific uniqueness (potentiality), higher self-esteem (being self-confident) and a higher personal involvement (inner motivation). To improve awareness, responsibility and self-confidence: here are the key-principles of every human development. And finally: '*coaching is a better way to make better business*' (Whitmore) in professional and private life.

Within training, *career coaching*, that is very similar but different from career counselling, is a way to organize guidance activities during training. Its main point of reference and attention are personal /transversal resources concerning the professional profile demanded at the end of the career (support/career training). Through *career coaching* activities one aims to recognize, analyze and implement such resources. Moreover, career coaching represents an experience of exchange and relationship which is functional to personal and professional growth; a service that allows, with the help also of external counsellors, to clearly understand professional objectives and identify instruments to reach them. It essentially puts the attention on **personal/transversal resources** connected with the professional profile demanded at the end of the career (support/career training). Thanks to the *career coaching* activities one aims to recognize, analyze and implement such resources.

Through it, it is possible, therefore:

- » To recognize one's competences and to plan next objectives;



- » To define priorities and a precise plan of action;
- » To develop an individual's potentialities;
- » To elaborate a career;
- » To choose among the possible options;
- » To address a person's professional growth.

*Career coaching* implies a different way to look at a person's own professional sphere, that transforms itself into a new motivation in dealing with his/her own job, colleagues, client and himself/herself. The challenge that coaching offers is that of increasing the choice options to identify a new job and/or recover the motivation to carry out his/her own professional activity: it represents without any doubt an experience of exchange and relationship that is functional to personal and professional growth.

It is useful, in this kind of training, to identify which are the main objectives of the relationship coach/coachee. They are:

- ***To increase awareness and responsibility in relation to choices to make;***
- ***To broaden coachee's decisional strategies;***
- ***To build together a global vision of perspectives;***
- ***To bring motions linked to the choice process to a comfort area.***

At the end of coaching sessions it is possible to recognize the true qualities that characterize an individual, re-found his/her own power on a solid basis of values, capacities and interests perceived as his/her own, and arrive thus to enhance his/her own professional uniqueness in the world.

Basically, before creating and structuring a *career coaching*, one should ask oneself some questions for which the coachee, guided by the coach, must try to find an answer, and these are:



- » *How can I promote myself better in the labour market?*
- » *Which conditions can I improve to live more satisfactorily my professional activity?*
- » *What did I do (or didn't I do) in my last working years that slowed down my professional growth? How can I restart ?*
- » *Which decisions can I take today to redirect my professional life according to my development wishes?*

Key-services offered in career counselling are:

- ⇒ **Analysis of job position;**
- ⇒ **Key competence assessment;**
- ⇒ **Self-marketing plan;**
- ⇒ **Support to outplacement;**
- ⇒ **Preparation to interviews and tests in the company.**

The *Career Coach* as a coach figure has more and more been used in the last few years. Continuous economic crisis and quicker social changes has created in people more and more professional crisis or even identity crisis. A *Career Coach* helps the client to face such difficulties, in guiding him/her to discover or rediscover his/her spontaneous bias and focus on them his/her attention.

*Career coaching* is very requested and this is because there are more and more difficulties in finding a job, especially for young people: one of the reasons why it is difficult to find a job is that young people haven't got clear working and professional targets, or simply studies target. Also retired people or people who want to retrain or change job ask for a *career coaching* session where one uses, among others, the instrument of *work and life balance*, very useful to help the person to get a better balance between professional activity and private life, conciliating life times and working times, relieving himself/herself of some bureaucratic tasks, managing better family problems- or connected to children-, organizing moments of free time and travels, finally trying to



live in a working environment as pleasant as possible, that is ‘customized’ according to one’s taste and needs, both personal and professional.

It is important to point out that a valid *career coaching* is functional not only with respect to personal and professional growth of individual, but it gives also concrete advantages to the company, in terms of:

- » Increase of *employee satisfaction* keeping costs low;
- » Reduction of *turnover* and facilitation of *retention* of most talented people;
- » Reduction of *absenteeism*;
- » Enhancement of the *image* of an employer qualified to the outside world;
- » Implementation of recruitment of *key-positions* and the best recent graduates;
- » Realization of the ratio *costs/benefits* of motivation initiatives of collaborators.

It seems clear that, if with young resources the meaning of this activity is especially linked to support in respect to the individuation of a professional project of their own, with more adult people such kind of interventions often arise from the fact that not always one has the luck to fill a position that fully enhances and lets develop completely one’s potentialities.

Sometimes the working routine absorbs so much power that one does not realize how much and in which way one could do more for oneself and one’s job: one must then stop and think about the path one is going through to understand if it is the right way or if a change of direction is necessary.

*Career coaching*, if on one side represents a guidance activity, on the other side it can be an action that lets arise individual changes, that concern different areas:

- **Behaviour style;**
- **Personal convictions;**



- **Management of critical situations;**
- **Relationship with the environment.**

In both cases, anyway, one necessarily speaks about individual career, as there is no univocal and general meaning of ‘advancing one’s career’, but each person gives to that a personal meaning, which can moreover change as time goes by and with the different professional phases one comes to be in.

Career coaching is a guidance and training proposal that mainly aims to:

- ⇒ **Identify/detect** user’s personal resources, particularly those concerning the final requested profile after training and professional growth;
- ⇒ **develop** personal resources concerning the final requested profile after training.

### Methodologies and Instruments

To develop career coaching activities there exist many tools, different from each other as functional to reach specific objectives and destined to users that have their own characteristics. In this connection one hereby quotes some examples of instruments to reach specific objectives:

INSTRUMENT	OBJECTIVE
Form: ‘Description of professional profile requested after training’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To detect professional resources;</li> <li>➤ To support and strengthen motivation.</li> </ul>
Form: ‘Identify your aptitudes’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To recognize one’s own individual resources;</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To underline possible changes to the aptitudes recognized during career.</li> </ul>
Self-monitoring agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To strengthen the sense of order, scrupulosity, attention to one's actions.</li> </ul>
Support materials for the stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To develop resources for career growth.</li> </ul>

To build a proper approach to coaching, it is necessary to use and share a common language and know the key-phases of the career coaching process. On this basis it is possible to build different coachings, each applicable in different professional situations and with different aims, such as:

1. *development HR strategies;*
2. *contribution to organizational change;*
3. *management of trade-union negotiations;*
4. *development of Performance Management;*
5. *selection and management of talented people;*
6. *realization of individual interviews;*
7. *analysis of training needs;*
8. *involvement of top management;*
9. *management of new visioning processes;*
10. *leadership training.*

Career coaching develops itself through a series of meetings face-to-face between coach and coachee, of about 2 hours each, that usually take place at the company's office. Usually the meetings take place every two weeks and the project's duration can vary from 6 to 12 months more or less, according to the quantity and type of objectives to reach, besides, of course, the rate of meetings. Career coaching will be effective only if one is able to realize the following:

- » *An open relationship between Coach and Coachee, based on trust;*
- » *Initial definition of clear, concrete and shares objectives, that generate a detailed plan of action;*

» *Coachee's commitment and availability to carry out the established plan.*

